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# U.S. Unveils New Era of Detention Operations in Afghanistan

In an impressive display of transparency and partnership with Afghan allies, U.S. military officials hosted a series of visits to the new Detention Facility in Parwan, located at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, in November 2009. The facility, which was complete but not yet occupied, is expected to advance the counterinsurgency and reintegration efforts of Afghanistan detainee operations while also complying with the highest standards of care and custody.

Visitors to the new facility included key leaders from the government of Afghanistan and personnel from various embassies, coalition forces, Afghan and international media, and human rights organizations. The visits were conducted by Task Force Protector, with support from Combined Joint Task Force (JTF) 82 and JTF 435.

The new facility, which will informally be referred to as the Detention Facility in Parwan until the Afghan government selects an appropriate name, replaces the Bagram Theater Internment Facility (located several kilometers away). The new, 40-acre compound is severable from the base and was specifically designed for detention operations and associated support requirements. The facility is expected to hold about 700 detainees (with an expanded capacity to support more than 1,100) who have been determined to have ties to al-Qaida, the Taliban, or associated forces engaged in hostilities against the United States or coalition partners. The programs and incorporated changes support the coalition counterinsurgency strategy to defeat violent extremism in Afghanistan. In addition, the humane living conditions of the facility exceed the mandatory standards set by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Furthermore, the new compound provides more recreational areas and improved medical facilities for detainees.

Officials say that the facility design is safer, more secure, and more accommodating, substantially improving the quality of life for detainees, guards, and other staff. "The Detention Facility in Parwan provides improved detainee living conditions and better accommodates family visitation as well as vocational, technical, and other programs to assist with peaceful reintegration of released detainees into Afghan society," said Brigadier General Mark S. Martins, interim commander of JTF 435.

The Detention Facility in Parwan is currently operated by Task Force Protector, under the command of Colonel John Garrity, commander of the 16th Military Police Brigade. However, JTF 435 will assume responsibility from Combined JTF 82 (upon order) for U.S. detainee operations in Afghanistan. These operations include the care and custody of detainees at the Detention Facility

in Parwan, oversight of detainee review processes, programs for the peaceful reintegration of detainees into society, and coordination with other agencies and partners for promotion of the rule of law in Afghanistan.

"This facility and these reintegration programs represent real progress; and in the coming months and years, they will promote transparency and legitimacy," added Martins. "We're linking up detention practices with longer-term strategic objectives, so it's not just international law, it's not just human rights, it's strategy and counterinsurgency in the context of Afghanistan."

Martins went on to say, "Detention, if not done properly, can actually harm the effort. We think transparency is certainly going to help the effort and increase the credibility of the whole process."

Martins was joined during the media events by key Afghan officials, including Brigadier General Haji Safiullah Juma, commandant of the Afghan National Detention Facility; Brigadier General Mohammad Mujahed, deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Defense; Deputy Minister of Justice Abdul Qadir Adalat-Khwa; and Brigadier General Arif Ahmadi, Ministry of Justice Central Prisons Directorate.

The U.S. government intends to transfer the Detention Facility in Parwan to the government of Afghanistan as soon as the transfer can responsibly occur in accordance with all applicable national and international laws. The new facility will substantially increase Afghanistan's capacity to securely detain serious offenders, including those determined to harm the population and institutions of state, while separating them, as necessary, from those for whom reconciliation, education, and peaceful reintegration into society are possible.

Afghanistan's Minister of Defense, Abdul Rahim Wardak, who was among the Afghan officials who visited the new facility, addressed the other participants following the tour, saying he was impressed by the quality of the facility and the expertise and professionalism of the guard force personnel. He expressed the consensus of the visitors in supporting a close partnership with U.S. officials to eventually transfer the facility to the government of Afghanistan, noting, "It's time for us to stand on our own feet." In his inaugural address days later, Afghan President Hamid Karzai echoed the same theme, setting the stage for the transition to an appropriate Afghan ministry.

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*This article was submitted by the Public Affairs Office, JTF 435.*

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