



United States Mission to the OSCE

New Presidential Plan to Permanently Close Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 3, 2016

I am pleased to inform the Permanent Council that on February 23, President Obama announced that the U.S. Department of Defense submitted a plan to the United States Congress to permanently close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility has been a priority of the President from the first days of his administration, and despite domestic political factors, the U.S. Government has made progress. Of the nearly 800 detainees once held at Guantanamo, more than 85 percent have already been transferred to other countries. Today, 91 detainees remain.

President Obama's administration is taking all possible steps to securely reduce the detainee population at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, and is working with the Congress to close the detention facility in a safe and responsible manner that protects our national security and that is consistent with our international obligations. So long as it remains open, the United States will continue to conduct detention operations at Guantanamo in a manner consistent with our international obligations; a responsibility we take very seriously. As the President said, "This is about closing a chapter in our history. It reflects the lessons that we've learned since 9/11 -- lessons that need to guide our nation going forward."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.