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Halliburton unit wins Guantánamo contract

A subsidiary of Houston-based Halliburton has been awarded \$30 million to build an improved 220-bed prison for terrorism suspects at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A subsidiary of Houston-based Halliburton has been awarded \$30 million to build an improved 220-bed prison for terrorism suspects at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the Pentagon announced. Kellogg Brown and Root of Arlington, Va., is to build a two-story prison that includes day rooms, exercise areas, medical bays, air conditioning and a security control room, according to the Pentagon. It is to be completed by July 2006.

Congress previously approved money for the construction job. Some members, along with human rights groups, are now calling for Guantánamo to close because of reports of prisoner abuse there and because the foreign detainees are being held indefinitely without charge.

"The future detention facility will be based on prison models in the U.S. and is designed to be safer for the long-term detention of detainees and the guards," according to a statement provided by a Pentagon spokesman. "It is also expected to require less manpower to operate."

The new prison building, called Detention Camp 6, will replace some of the older facilities at the Navy base, which officials say are not adequate for holding prisoners for the long term.

The job is part of a larger contract that could be worth up to \$500 million through 2010, the Pentagon said. The Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic, in Norfolk, Va., is the contracting agency. Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., issued a statement criticizing the deal, calling Halliburton the "scandal-plagued former employer of Vice President Cheney." Lautenberg has sought hearings into the contracts awarded to Halliburton for work in Iraq.

About 520 prisoners from the Bush administration's war on terrorism are held at Guantánamo. Already, \$110 million has been spent on construction there, and the prison costs about \$95 million a year to operate.