

The Peace Booth at the 2007 North Carolina State Fair

Background for the Petition to Close Guantanamo

For more than five years, the US has imprisoned more than 700 men from about 45 nations in a prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Despite numerous allegations of torture and ill-treatment, international condemnation, three deaths in custody, several unfavorable court decisions, and not a single conviction of a detainee for any crime, Guantanamo remains in operation.

Guantanamo prisoners are subjected to human rights violations. In addition to torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, some prisoners have been subjected to unfair trial proceedings; others have been rendered to third countries that torture. Still others have been disappeared into secret CIA prisons.

By continuing to insist the US has the right to detain people indefinitely without access to due process, and outside the rule of law, the Bush administration has placed the US squarely on the wrong side of history.

All Guantanamo prisoners should be charged immediately and be given a fair trial, or released unconditionally and not sent anywhere where they would face torture or more human rights abuses. It is time to bring this nation back into the community of nations as a country that upholds human rights and the rule of law.

The Guantanamo situation also has direct ties to North Carolina due to the Central Intelligence Agency practice known as "extraordinary rendition," a term that essentially means torture by proxy. According to numerous media accounts, two jets used by the CIA to kidnap suspected terrorists and transport them are maintained at Smithfield's Johnston County Airport, located less than 30 miles from the fairgrounds.

Those CIA jets are maintained by Aero Contractors, and three of Aero's North Carolina-based pilots have been indicted in Germany and Italy for their involvement with extraordinary rendition.

Aero's jets have been spotted all over the globe in airports throughout Europe and the Middle East. After leaving Johnston County, the jets make a stop over at Washington's Dulles Airport to pick up a CIA team. From there, the flights head out in search of suspected terrorists, who are sometimes snatched off the streets in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, and brought to places like Egypt, Morocco, Libya and Uzbekistan, where they have reportedly been tortured in an attempt to glean information about terrorist cells. Finally, some of the suspects have been transported to Guantanamo.