

November 9, 2015

President Barrack Obama

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned Sheriffs from the State of Colorado, write in strong opposition to your proposed actions to transfer dangerous foreign enemy combatants held at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, military detention facility to civilian prisons in our state.

As the top law enforcement officials in our counties, elected by our citizens and charged with maintaining public safety and security in our respective counties, we are concerned that utilizing current civilian prisons in our state would significantly – and unnecessarily – endanger our citizens.

The prisons being reviewed are all high security prisons, indicating that officials responsible for the detainment of these individuals believe that the prisoners represent a significant security threat to the citizens of our state. We do not question the ability of Bureau of Prisons to detain these prisoners, but we recognize that there is a more significant public safety concern – the danger posed by sympathizers who would mount an attack on these facilities or commit other acts of terror in our state to draw further attention to their causes.

We recently learned that the FBI has almost 1,000 active ISIS investigations taking place inside the borders of the United States. We believe it would be dangerously naïve not to recognize that a civilian prison with an untold number of enemy combatant inmates, located in our state, would provide a very tempting target for anyone wishing to either free these detainees or simply wishing to make a political statement.

While civilian prisons were built to keep inmates in, they were not designed to deter or repel organized attacks from the outside.

As sheriffs, we are tremendously concerned that our communities can and will be endangered if civilian prisons inside our state are utilized to hold enemy combatants from Guantanamo Bay. Recent history has shown us repeated examples around the globe of coordinated, violent attacks

against prisons holding radical Islamic militants. We strongly protest actions that might well add our state to the list of locations where such deadly attacks have occurred.

The locations that the Department of Defense recently scouted for proposed transfer of these detainees are in close proximity to densely-populated areas of Pueblo and Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs is home to the U.S. Air Force Academy, Peterson Air Force Base, Buckley Air Force Base, and Fort Carson. Pueblo is home to the U.S. Army's Chemical Weapons Depot.

Further adding to our statewide concern is the reality that any detainees housed in our state will likely be accessing the federal court system. That will require transporting them to the federal district courts or federal court of appeals, located in Denver. The transportation of these detainees from Fremont County to the Denver metropolitan area will cross many counties and will create many safety and security threats to our communities that must be addressed by Colorado sheriffs.

In the 1990s, we experienced the dangers and threats to our capital city, Denver, when two domestic terrorists, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, were tried there. Security during that trial was unprecedented. We can only imagine the disruptions and dangers throughout our state if enemy combatants from Guantanamo Bay were routinely transported from Canon City to the heart of our capital city of Denver.

In Colorado, county sheriffs are responsible for enforcement of criminal law and keeping the peace throughout the state, not a state police agency. When individual sheriff's offices are overwhelmed, we draw from our fellow sheriffs for assistance through mutual aid requests.

Therefore, this matter concerns and affects each and every sheriff across the state

Mr. President, we deplore you to reconsider your plans to redeploy enemy combatants from a secured military base in Cuba to civilian prisons in Colorado.

We recognize the risk to our citizens from this ill-conceived plan is too high. We respectfully urge you to reconsider this plan and keep these terrorists safely far away from our nation's shores and our great state.

Most Respectfully,

Sheriff James Beicker, Fremont County

Sheriff Anthony Mazzola, Rio Blanco County

Sheriff Bill Elder, El Paso County

Sheriff Brett Powell, Logan County

Sheriff Brett Schroetlin, Grand County

Sheriff Bruce Hartman, Gilpin County

Sheriff Chad Day, Yuma County

Sheriff Dan Warwick, Saguache County

Sheriff David Walcher, Arapaho County

Sheriff Dominic Mativa, Ouray County
Sheriff Fred Hosselkus, Mineral County
Sheriff Fred McKee, Delta County
Sheriff Fred Wegener, Park County
Sheriff Garrett Wiggins, Routt County
Sheriff James Van Beek, Eagle County
Sheriff James Casias, Las Animas County
Sheriff Jim Crone, Morgan County
Sheriff Jeff Shrader, Jefferson County
Sheriff Jerry Martin, Dolores County
Sheriff John Minor, Summit County
Sheriff Jon Stivers, Washington County
Sheriff Justin Smith, Larimer County
Sheriff KC Hume, Moffat County
Sheriff Lou Vallario, Garfield County
Sheriff Matt Lewis, Mesa County
Sheriff Mike Ensminger, Teller County
Sheriff Mike McIntosh, Adams County
Sheriff Richard Albers, Clear Creek County
Sheriff Rich Valdez, Archuleta County
Sheriff Rick Besecker, Gunnison County
Sheriff Rick Dunlap, Montrose County
Sheriff Robert Jackson, Alamosa County
Sheriff Rod Fenske, Lake County
Sheriff Ron Bruce, Hinsdale County
Sheriff Sam Zordel, Prowers County
Sheriff Shayne Heap, Elbert County
Sheriff Steve Nowlin, Montezuma County
Sheriff Steve Reams, Weld County
Sheriff Tom Hanna, Sedgwick County
Sheriff Tom Ridnour, Kit Carson County

Sheriff Tony Spurlock, Douglas County

Cc:

Senator Michael Bennett

Senator Cory Gardner

Representative Dianna DeGette

Representative Jared Polis

Representative Scott Tipton

Representative Ken Buck

Representative Doug Lamborn

Representative Mik Coffman

Representative Ed Perlmutter