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## Obama: 'Global War on Terror' Is Over

**White House unveils new rhetoric for defeating al-Qaida, lone-wolf terrorists, including closing Gitmo**

By [PAUL D. SHINKMAN](#)

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The "Global War on Terror" is over, President Barack Obama announced Thursday, saying the military and intelligence agencies will not wage war against a tactic but will instead focus on a specific group of networks determined to destroy the U.S.

This shift in rhetoric accompanies new or updated efforts to defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates, the president said in a speech at the National Defense University within Washington, DC's Fort McNair. Al-Qaida in Pakistan and Afghanistan is on a "path to defeat," he said, so the U.S. must focus instead on al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula -- "the most active" in plotting against the U.S. -- homegrown violent extremism and unrest in the Arab world that leads to attacks like the assault on the Benghazi diplomatic post.

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Allowing drone strikes, including [those against American citizens](#), and closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay are chief among the first steps in accomplishing this goal, he said.

"We must define our effort not as a boundless 'Global War on Terror,' but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America," Obama said.



President Barack Obama speaks about his administration's drone and counterterrorism policies at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., on May 23, 2013.



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"Deranged or alienated individuals – often U.S. citizens or legal residents – can do enormous damage, particularly when inspired by larger notions of violent jihad. That pull towards extremism appears to have led to the shooting at Fort Hood, and the bombing of the Boston Marathon," he said. "So that's the current threat: Lethal yet less capable al-Qaida affiliates. Threats to diplomatic facilities and businesses abroad. Homegrown extremists. This is the future of terrorism. We must take these threats seriously, and do all that we can to confront them."

Part of this effort includes closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, which Obama says has "become a symbol around the world for an America that flouts the rule of law."

The president plans to reopen an office at the Department of State -- which [he closed in January](#) -- to act as a special envoy and work with the Department of Defense to find ways to return each detainee to their home country. Obama has also tasked the Department of Defense to designate a site within the U.S. to hold military commissions, two of which are currently underway in [a special court at Guantanamo Bay](#).

He also announced Thursday he is lifting the moratorium on detainee transfers to Yemen to allow for a case-by-case analysis on each detainee.

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"To the greatest extent possible, we will transfer detainees who have been cleared to go to other countries," he said. "Where appropriate, we will bring terrorists to justice in our courts and military justice system. And we will insist that judicial review be available for every detainee."

Obama has consistently railed against the detention facility and how it is viewed throughout the world.

"It is critical for us to understand that Guantanamo is not necessary to keep America safe," he said in [a speech at the end of April](#). "It is expensive, it is inefficient, it hurts us in terms of our international standing, it lessens cooperation with our allies on counterterrorism efforts, it is a recruitment tool for extremists."

Obama's attempts to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility during his first term were blocked by Congress. Of the hundreds of detainees brought to the remote base on the southeastern end of Cuba, only 166 remain. A handful are awaiting trial. The rest are either deemed too dangerous to release -- but are precluded from trial due to lack of evidence or evidence tainted by enhanced interrogation techniques -- or their home country will no longer accept them.

The U.S. government is prohibited from releasing detainees to a country where they will likely be killed.

"Once we commit to a process of closing Gitmo, I am confident that this legacy problem can be resolved, consistent with our commitment to the rule of law," he said.

The ongoing hunger strikes among a reported majority of the detainees contributed to Obama's decision to push again for the facility's closure. A woman in the audience at NDU interrupted Obama twice during this portion of his remarks Thursday to protest the treatment of the detainees.

"The president has always been committed to closing Gitmo," a White House senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity told reporters. The timing coincides with the agenda Obama set forth in his second term, "but part of the context of that is people taking drastic steps of hunger strikes in Gitmo."

This new push to close the facility, which costs roughly \$150 million per year to operate, comes days after the White House requested \$200 million on behalf of the Department of Defense for maintenance, upgrades at Guantanamo Bay, and roughly \$250 million for operations.

A Pentagon official who spoke on the condition of anonymity says these upgrades would take 2-3 years, not 8-10 as the [AP originally reported](#), and would include amalgamating some of the facility's buildings into a single location. It will address "fair wear and tear" on some of the facilities and to upgrade others that were never designed to permanently house detainees for multiple years.

"A lot of this is about safety and security," for both guards and detainees, the official says. There is no anticipation of growing the facility to house more than 166 detainees.

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