

By Mark Impomeni, 5/4/09

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Republicans appear to have secured a major victory over the Obama Administration and the Democratic leadership of Congress on the president's request for \$81 million to close the terrorist detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Democrats dropped President Obama's request for the closure money from the text of a \$94 billion supplemental appropriations bill to fund operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. [Democrats dropped the provision in the face of criticism from Republicans over the Administration's as yet unannounced plans for housing the detainees](#) once the facility closes.

Iowa Rep. Steve King (R) summed up Republican criticism of President Obama's plan to close Guantanamo Bay, framing it as a national security issue.

"[Closing Guantanamo] just never stood up to logic. There is no place on the planet to take the worst of the worst that would treat them as well as they are treated at [Guantanamo]."

The bottom line really is that [if the prisoners are released], innocent people will die and some of them likely will be Americans." A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, said that Republican obstructionism was to blame for the funding being removed from the war supplemental. But as the minority party, Republicans have little or no ability to influence legislation in the drafting stage. That the funding was removed is far more indicative of the political pressure Democrats are feeling as a result of Republican criticism than of any organized effort by Republicans to cut the controversial provision from the bill.

President Obama [signed an executive order](#) to great fanfare in the earliest days of his Administration directing that the detention center at Guantanamo Bay would close within one year. It was billed as the fulfillment of a campaign promise, and a major break with Bush Administration policies in the war on terror. But critics have always asserted that the move was incomplete absent a plan for what to do with the detainees held there, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and some of the plotters of the September 11th attacks. Now Democrats in Congress appear to be responding to that criticism by quietly denying the president the funding to close Guantanamo Bay. Congress can still provide the money in a separate appropriation. But it is clear now that President Obama will have to provide more details about his plans for housing terrorists currently held at the facility if he wants the money necessary to turn his rhetoric into action.