

GITMO: THE SAME OLD NEW OPAQUE TRANSPARENCY

Last week we wondered what the appointment of the “new and improved” Gitmo Commander, Army Brig. Gen. Mark Martins, would mean for the military commission system and upcoming big terror trials for the likes of al-Nashiri and KSM, and what it meant for the press coverage. Well, predictably, it appears to be rendering the same old same old.

Carol Rosenberg brings us the latest:

The website was unveiled last month to rehabilitate the reputation of the Guantanamo war court. So far it’s a hodgepodge of secrecy _ and still a work in progress, according to Defense Department officials, while clerks, lawyers and the intelligence community haggle behind the scenes over what the public can see.

It’s been more than a year in the making and the Pentagon has yet to reveal its cost. Every screen bears the slogan “fairness, transparency, justice.”

But a review of the content has found that it pointedly leaves out some of the key controversies that have bedeviled the war crimes trials, from allegations of torture to a comparison of the Seminole Indian tribe to al Qaida.

Disappointing, to say the least, but par for the course for the Gitmo experience. And, let’s be clear, it is not that they just haven’t had time to “work the kinks out” as this project has been underway for well over a year. And there is fantastic experience to draw from in the way of the Federal Court system’s PACER system. There are simply not that many detainees in total,

much less defendants, to be entered into the system. The still dysfunctional and unusable system is the result of indifference, if not outright intent. As there will be no trials until next year at the earliest, maybe the situation can be remedied in time; but that will require the actual intent to do so. And that seems in short supply.

What I suspected would be the case has now been confirmed, namely that the "broadcast" of the commission trials will be a restricted joke.

Again from Carol and the Miami Herald:

Pohl, the chief military commissions judge, assigned himself to the case, according to Defense Department sources, and chose the late October date to give the government time to finish a close-circuit feed site at Fort Meade, Md., outside Washington, D.C.

Up to 100 reporters could watch the Guantánamo arraignment on a 40-second delay under the new Fort Meade hook-up being inaugurated with the Cole trial to ease demand on a crude media tent city at the remote Navy base in southeast Cuba, which can accommodate 60 journalists.

There also will reportedly be a feed for a select few of the victims' families. But zilch for the broader press, and nothing for the public. Just as with the suggested benefits and propriety of transparency on the targeting of American citizens for assassination, it would place the United States on a higher moral plane and demonstrate resolve and ethics to demonstrate to its citizens, and those of the world, that it is indeed providing a fair and just trial process for the detainees.

Necessary steps can easily enough shield that which must be, there is no reason not to show what this country stands for. Open and public justice is the best justice. Unless, that is,

what we really stand for is not particularly
just.