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Heinz Kerry says detainees deserve POW status

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By James Neal, Associated Press, 11/25/2003

SEATTLE -- The wife of Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kerry said yesterday that suspected terrorists held at Guantanamo Bay should be given prisoner of war status.

"They were captured while fighting a war," Teresa Heinz Kerry said at an informal discussion with minority activists in Seattle. "They should have the rights that other prisoners of war have had."

Heinz Kerry said that denying the detainees the protections of the Geneva Convention is "insulting, ignorant, and insensitive" to the rest of the world.

She added that under President Bush, the United States, once known as the standard-bearer for human rights, is now considered a hypocrite.

"The arrogance shown by this administration on human rights and in its foreign policy is horrible," she said.

Some 660 people suspected of taking part in terrorist activity are being held at the prison on the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Many were captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan two years ago in the war on terrorism and are believed to be members of Al Qaeda or the Taliban.

The Bush administration has said its top priority is interrogating the detainees for intelligence on any planned terrorist attacks. A spokeswoman for the Kerry campaign said Senator Kerry supports his wife's position that the detainees should be given basic protections such as the right to an attorney.

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