

OBAMA-ERA MILITARY COMMISSIONS: CRAMMING ON THE RULES

Spencer's down in Gitmo this week, supposedly watching the beginning of Omar Khadr's hearing. Only, as he just reported, the manual laying out rules for the military commissions only got signed an hour ago by Secretary of Defense Bob Gates.

A source from the convening authority for the military commissions just informed the press corps that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has finally signed and issued a Manual for the Military Commissions Act of 2009. It's 7:30 p.m. as I write this. Approximately 13 and a half hours from now, Col. Pat Parrish, the military judge presiding over Omar Khadr's pre-trial hearing, will gavel the first full-fledged military commission proceeding of the Obama administration into order. The source told us that as of right now, prosecution and defense counsels are meeting with Parrish to inform him that the Manual is out.

Oh, one more thing: As of right now, a copy of the Manual isn't at Guantanamo Bay. No one involved in tomorrow's hearing has read it. Apparently its a very big file – inches thick if printed out – and internet speeds here are pretty slow.

In other words, Obama's new-and-improved military commissions are going to start by asking everyone involved to cram on the rules the night before the commissions actually kick off.