

U.S. Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure Resigns

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“Under Cliff’s leadership, and because of his skill in leading our diplomatic negotiations with our foreign partners, over the past 18 months we have transferred 34 detainees from Gitmo, with more transfers to come,” State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said.

“He leaves us on a very strong footing, and with a clear path toward reducing the detainee population in a responsible manner, and to closing, ultimately, the detention facility,” Harf added.

Sloan, who is returning to the private sector, was tapped in June 2013 to coordinate from the State Department the administration’s efforts to close the prison for terrorism suspects, a campaign promise made by President Barack Obama.

Sloan had said that he had always intended to remain in the post for 18 months, Harf said at the daily State Department press conference, adding that reports that he was leaving because he was “frustrated” at the slow progress in getting Guantanamo closed were not correct.

The daily New York Times, citing officials close to Sloan, said that his resignation was due to his frustration over the Defense Department’s slowness in transferring prisoners who have received the green light to leave Guantanamo.

Sloan, a close confidant of Secretary of State John Kerry, said in an interview with the paper that “At this point, we’re in a position to see a lot of progress. I’m strongly in favor of moving

forward as promptly as we can on the president's commitment to close the facility.”

There are currently 132 prisoners at the detention center opened during the George W. Bush administration after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to house terrorism suspects.

Harf said that when Sloan became special envoy for the detention camp, there were 166 prisoners there, and in the preceding two years only four had been approved for transfer.

So far, no replacement for Sloan has been announced, although Harf said that this would occur “soon.”

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