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Obama dealt setback on bid to close federal prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

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Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, told reporters Monday that the final bill omits a provision giving the president the authority to transfer terror suspects to the United States if Congress signs off on a comprehensive plan to close the prison.

Levin had pushed for the authority and hailed it in May as creating “a path to close Guantanamo.” With lawmakers rushing to complete the defense bill in this month's lame-duck session, Levin said proponents were unable to prevail.

The House and Senate are expected to vote and overwhelmingly approve the sweeping policy bill in the coming days.

The president has pushed to close the post-9/11 prison since his inauguration in 2009.

In its version of the Defense bill in May, the Senate Armed Services Committee included a provision that would authorize the transfer of terror suspects to U.S. soil “for detention, trial and incarceration, subject to stringent security measures and legal protections, once the president has submitted a plan to Congress for closing Guantanamo and Congress has had an opportunity to vote to disapprove that plan under expedited procedures.”

The House version of the defense bill prohibited the transfer to U.S. soil, and Republican and Democratic lawmakers who have repeatedly and successfully fought White House efforts to move detainees prevailed in the final version of the defense bill.

