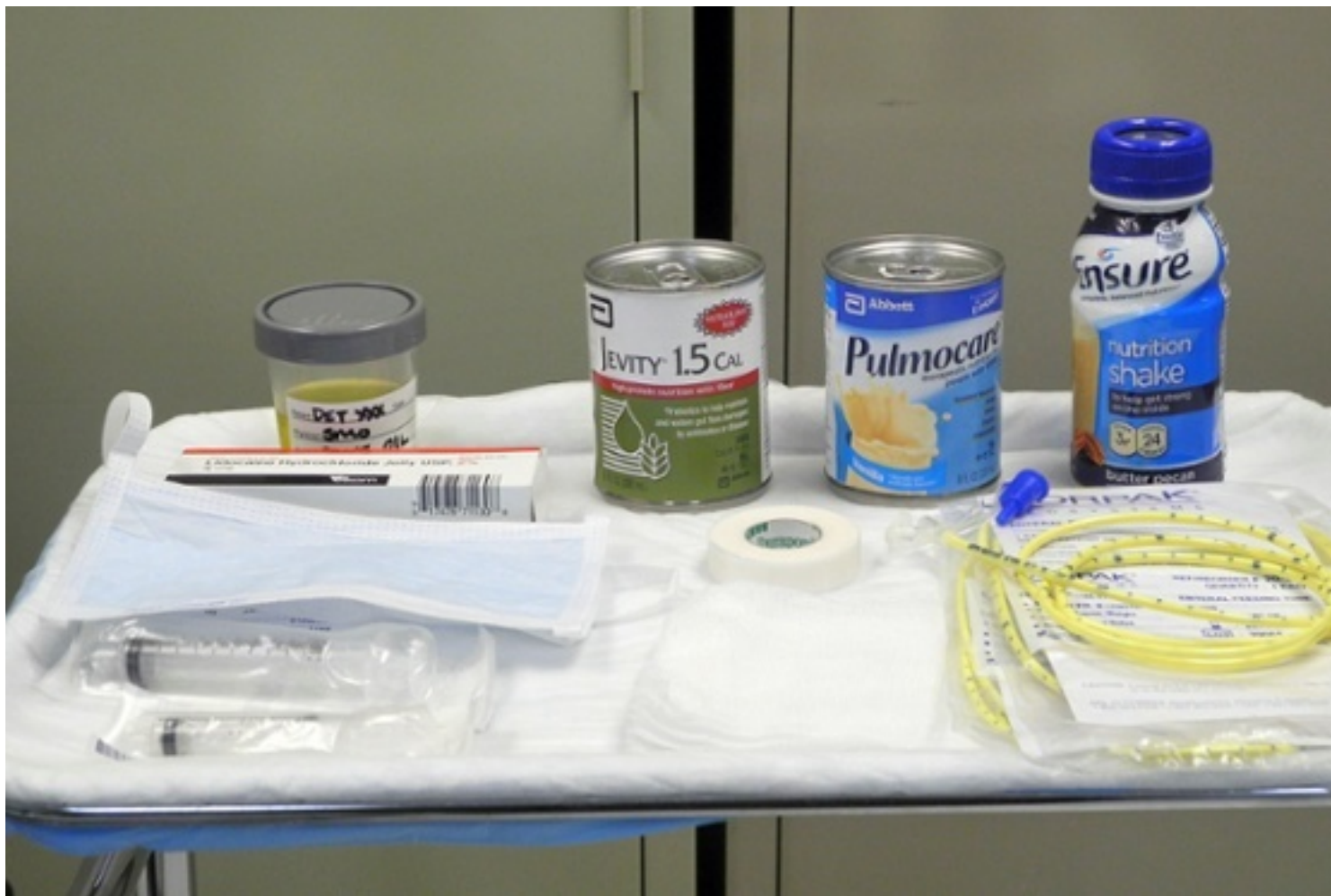


By Spencer Ackerman

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The [Obama administration](#) will ask a federal appeals court to overturn a judge's ruling that it must disclose videos depicting its controversial tube feedings of hunger strikers at Guantánamo Bay.

The long-expected decision from the Justice Department, filed in court on Tuesday, comes two months after Judge Gladys Kessler of the Washington DC federal district court ruled that the [government did possess a compelling rationale](#) for preventing the public from viewing the forcible feedings and detention cell removals of a Syrian detainee.

The department's appeal comes alongside a request to Kessler to stay her disclosure ruling indefinitely.

"There is no qualified public right of access to classified information entered into evidence relating to a motion for a preliminary injunction in a habeas proceeding," a group of department lawyers wrote in their Tuesday motion, adding that the government wishes to "augment its declaration with additional evidence" before the appeals court.

The government rejects the notion that force feeding is abusive but argues that release of the tapes risks "adversely affecting security conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq".

An appeal throws into jeopardy a transparency ruling that human rights campaigners considered a victory for revealing a practice at Guantánamo that has attracted international criticism. It renews what lawyers consider to be a courtroom clash between the first amendment and national security.

"I wonder how many times the president is going to make a joke of his promise to run the most transparent administration in history before we call him on it," said Cori Crider of the human rights group Reprieve, who has seen the videotapes in closed court sessions while representing the Syrian detainee, Abu Wa'el Dhiab.

The Guardian is among a media coalition that joined the lawsuit seeking release of the videos.

More than 30 tapes spanning 11 hours are understood to graphically show Dhiab receiving a treatment he contends is painful to the point of torturous. Last month, Dhiab lost an unprecedented hearing in Kessler's court seeking an injunction to the feedings and forced cell removals, which he contended was a punitive and medically unnecessary push by Guantánamo officials to break a hunger strike protesting long-term confinement without charge.

The very existence of the tapes had [remained a secret](#) until Dhiab's lawsuit. Last month, with the potential release of censored versions of the tapes looming, the detentions task force commander, Rear Admiral Kyle Cozad, [banned taping the feedings](#), on grounds that the tapes posed a risk of revealing operational military practices.

The feedings, however, will continue, Cozad told AFP, to preserve "the health of the detainee population." Guantánamo officials have for over a year declined to release information about how many of the detention center's 142 remaining detainees remain on hunger strike.

Crider likened the tapes to imagery from the Abu Ghraib torture sessions in Iraq, the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, and the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, saying these are instances of "major moments of US history where a whole debate has changed because of an image".

In a May 2013 speech, Barack Obama referred to the force feedings his administration continues to administer by asking: "Is this who we are? Is that something our founders foresaw? Is that the America we want to leave our children? Our sense of justice is stronger than that."

Crider said that without disclosing the tapes, "How can we have this conversation about whether this is what we as Americans will do in 2014?"