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Kuwaiti Claims Psychological Torture at Guantanamo

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KUWAIT CITY, June 1 -- Kuwait's first Guantanamo returnee, who was injured during the US-led war on the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan, charged Wednesday he was subjected to psychological torture at the US detention camp in Cuba.

"It was more of psychological than physical torture. In the beginning, they prevented us from sleeping. They gave us little food and they charged me with being a member of Al-Qaeda," Nasser Najr al-Mutairi told AFP outside a Kuwaiti court.

Looking frail and weak, Mutairi still has his left foot and ankle in bandage because of wounds he received during US raids on northern Afghanistan in late 2001.

"Fighters loyal to (Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid) Dostum shot at us randomly while US warplanes pounded us ... I was hit in the back, on my left foot and lost a toe in the attack," he said.

Mutairi, who was repatriated in January after three years in Guantanamo, was released on a 680-dollar bail by Kuwait's criminal court on April 13 and banned from leaving the emirate.

On Wednesday, the court allowed Mutairi's lawyer to take photocopies of reports of the investigations conducted by US interrogators in Guantanamo Bay and set the next hearing for June 15.

Mutairi, 28, is charged with working for a foreign country and committing an act of aggression against a foreign nation, thus endangering Kuwait's relations, and training in the use of arms.

He has denied the charges and claimed he went to Afghanistan as a relief worker and that he does not know how to use arms.

His lawyer Mubarak al-Shimmari has said that Mutairi, who was released under an agreement between Washington and Kuwait, was not involved in fighting when he was in Afghanistan, but was involved in Kuwaiti relief work.

"I went to Afghanistan on my own to volunteer in distributing relief. I bought food from my own money and gave it to the local population ... I had never trained on arms," said Mutairi, who is a government employee.

He said he went to Afghanistan "well before the US war", but he failed to give a specific date.

"I was in the north, near Mazar-i-Sharif. I wanted to return to Kuwait but all roads were blocked. Afghan civilians took us to an old castle named Janki," said Mutairi, who was with dozens of other Arabs.

A few days later, Dostum's militia and US forces pounded them, killing and wounding many people, he said. He was later taken to a local hospital from where he was captured by US forces and transferred to Guantanamo.

Mutairi reached Guantanamo in early February 2002, and spent four months in hospital where he said he "miraculously survived the serious wounds".

"I was then moved to Camp Delta and put in a small metal cage. I was handcuffed all the time and my legs tied in chains. I could see other prisoners and talk to them from my cage," he said.

Eleven Kuwaitis are still detained in the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay.

According to the US lawyer defending the Kuwaitis, Thomas Wilmer, most of them "were captured by bounty hunters in 2001 near the Afghan-Pakistan border and sold to the United States".