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Five Kuwaitis to Return From Guantanamo Thursday

Agence France Presse
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KUWAIT CITY - Five Kuwaiti nationals who have been held at the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, will arrive home on Thursday, the foreign ministry undersecretary said in comments published Wednesday.

"The five Kuwaitis who have been released from Guantanamo will be in Kuwait tomorrow (Thursday)," Khaled al-Jarallah told Al-Watan daily without providing further details.

The daily quoted unnamed sources that a special Kuwaiti plane left the emirate on Monday to repatriate the five inmates on Thursday, which marks the start of the Eid Al-Fitr feast that ends the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan.

After returning to Kuwait, the five detainees will be tried before a Kuwaiti court, Kuwaiti officials said.

The five men are among 11 Kuwaitis who have been imprisoned at Guantanamo for nearly the last four years without trial.

A Kuwaiti national previously held at Guantanamo was repatriated in January.

Nasser Najr al-Mutairi, 28, was sentenced on Tuesday to five years in jail by the appeals court which overturned a verdict to acquit him by the lower court in June, his lawyer Mubarak al-Shimmari told AFP Wednesday.

"Although the sentence is harsh, we must respect court verdicts. I will challenge the ruling to the court of cassation," Kuwait's supreme court whose rulings are final, Shimmari said.

Mutairi was charged with committing an act of aggression against a friendly foreign nation by fighting against US forces in Afghanistan under the former Taliban regime and training in the use of arms.

The head of the society of families of Kuwaiti prisoners in Guantanamo, Khalid al-Ouda, told AFP last month that Kuwaiti and US officials are engaged in talks for the release of the remaining six prisoners.

Around 500 detainees are held at the Guantanamo detention center, which was set up in 2002 soon after the start of the US-led offensive against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001.

In September, six Kuwaiti prisoners joined a hunger strike staged by about 200 inmates to protest their conditions and prolonged confinement without trial, Ouda said.

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