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## **Afghans Praise Release of Gitmo List**

AMIR SHAH  
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KABUL , Afghanistan - An independent Afghan commission working to free Afghan detainees from the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay praised on Thursday the release of a list of captives' names, including more than 100 Afghans.

Sayeed Sharif Youssefi, a senior official at Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation commission, said the list sheds light on how many Afghans are in the U.S. detention facility in Cuba and who they are.

"This is very good news and it helps us because now it is easy for us to identify the Afghans in Guantanamo, learn how many there are and from which provinces they come from," Youssefi said. "We are planning to send a delegation from our office to Guantanamo to check on those Afghan detainees there."

The commission encourages Taliban militants to lay down weapons and reconcile with the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

Some 125 Afghans appeared on the list of 558 names provided Wednesday in response to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by The Associated Press. They were among the first swept up in the U.S. global war on terrorism for suspected links to al-Qaida or the Taliban. It wasn't immediately clear how many of the Afghans remain in custody.

The list refers to Guantanamo detainees who passed through the Combatant Status Review Tribunal process in 2004 and 2005 to determine whether they should be deemed "enemy combatants."

It includes top former Taliban officials such as the ousted regime's former Defense Ministry chief of staff Mullah Mohammed Fazil; Taliban intelligence officials Abdul Haq Wasiq and Gholam Ruhani, who are believed to still be in custody; and the Taliban's former ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef, who was released in late 2005.

Fazil, from the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, led many battles against Northern Alliance forces during the militia's rule, including the capture of the northern Kunduz province in the late 1990s. He was arrested there following the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

Wasiq and Ruhani, both related, hail from Ghazni province and were regarded as leading intelligence officials.

Also on the list is Khirullah Said Wali Khairkhwa, chief of police after the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996. He later became interior minister and governor of Herat province, from where he commanded the Taliban's military forces in southwestern Afghanistan.

Elsewhere, China responded to the release of the list by requesting the United States return Uighur prisoners from western China who are being held in the detention center. Beijing claims the detainees are part of a violent Muslim separatist movement fighting for an independent state called "East Turkestan."

"We hope the American side would repatriate the terrorists of the Chinese citizens," ministry spokesman Qin Gang said at a regular briefing. "Terrorism is the enemy of humankind. East Turkestan is a part of the international terrorist force and casts a serious threat to international societies including China and the U.S."

The list released Wednesday includes 22 Chinese nationals. The biggest Muslim ethnic group in China are Uighurs but it wasn't immediately clear if all the detainees were from that group.

U.S. officials say they cannot send the Uighur prisoners back to China because they likely will be tortured or killed.