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Pakistani Official Accuses U.S. of Concealing Information About Inmates at Guantanamo Bay

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ISLAMABAD , Pakistan (AP) - A senior Pakistani security official on Thursday accused Washington of having concealed information about detainees at Guantanamo Bay, saying there were more Pakistani nationals held at the U.S. prison for terror suspects than previously thought.

The Interior Ministry official, who is familiar with Pakistan's efforts to secure the release of its nationals from the U.S. military base on Cuba, said that as recently as last month, Pakistan thought just seven of its citizens were being held there.

"According to the latest information provided to us by America, 22 Pakistanis are still detained there," he said. "It is a fact that they have been concealing information from us about our people detained at Guantanamo Bay."

The new information was shared with Pakistan by U.S. officials this month, said the official, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. It wasn't clear whether the additional inmates were detained more recently than the other seven.

The official welcomed the release of a list of 558 Guantanamo detainee names by the Pentagon in response to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by The Associated Press, the most extensive accounting yet of the people held there.

The list included 13 Pakistanis. The official said he was aware that at least five of those Pakistanis were still being detained.

There was no immediate comment from the Foreign Ministry.

Lt. Col. Todd Vician, a Pentagon spokesman, said he was not immediately able to comment on the official's allegation.

Thousands of Pakistanis -- most supporters of pro-Taliban hardline Islamic parties -- crossed to fight in neighboring Afghanistan during the U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban regime in late 2001. Some were rounded up by coalition forces and sent for detention at Guantanamo.

The Pakistani official said that initially Washington had informed Pakistan that it was holding about 51 Pakistanis suspected of having links with the Taliban and al-Qaida, but so far, some 68 have been repatriated.

He would not give further details about the 22 Pakistanis still held. He said efforts were under way to get them back.

"We are in touch with the U.S. officials. Our Foreign Ministry is making efforts to ensure the release of our people," the official said.

The list of names released Wednesday by the Pentagon was the first official roster of Guantanamo detainees who passed through the Combatant Status Review Tribunal process in 2004 and 2005 to determine whether they should be deemed "enemy combatants."

In all, the detainees on the list came from 41 countries. The largest number -- 132 -- came from Saudi Arabia. Afghanistan followed with 125, including some top former Taliban officials. Yemen was next with 107.