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Some in Guantanamo to Go to Afghan Jail

Associated Press
January 6, 2006

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) - A prison near Kabul is being refurbished to house about 100 Afghans who are expected to be sent back here from U.S. military custody at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, officials said.

Workers have started reconstructing a block of Policharki Prison, Afghanistan's main jail, to improve the living standards of detainees and the level of security, Gen. Mohammed Zahir Azimi said Thursday. Azimi, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Defense Ministry, gave no other details.

Deputy Justice Minister Mohammed Qasim Hashimzai, who is responsible for the prison, said the work was being paid for by the United States.

He said it wasn't clear when the refurbishment would be complete or when the prisoners at Guantanamo would be transferred back here.

The United States and the Afghan government announced in August that Afghans held in U.S. military custody at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere would be sent back to Afghanistan, but didn't say when. The Pentagon at the time said about 110 Afghans were being held at the prison on the U.S. naval base in eastern Cuba.

American and allied Afghan forces captured thousands of suspected Taliban and al-Qaida members in Afghanistan after a U.S.-led invasion toppled the repressive Taliban government in late 2001. Hundreds of detainees were classified as "enemy combatants" and transferred to Guantanamo. Many have since been returned home.