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Ex-Afghan Governor Has Guantanamo Hearing

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - The former governor of an Afghanistan province has gone before a U.S. military panel to determine whether he should remain held as an enemy combatant, a Pentagon official said Tuesday.

A 37-year-old who was the governor of western Herat province from 1999 to 2001 appeared before the panel Monday, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Daryl Borgquist, a spokesman for the Combatant Status Review Tribunals.

The military does not identify individual prisoners at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

However, the governor of Herat from 1999 until the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 was Khairullah Khaikhwa. He was arrested in a Pakistani village near the Afghan border in 2002. Borgquist said the prisoner who appeared Monday had been at Guantanamo for about two years.

Borgquist said the prisoner had control over police and military operations in Herat, including the Taliban's two largest military divisions, which apparently made him an enemy combatant.

No media members attended his hearing, and details of his testimony were not released.

The review tribunals considered the cases of six prisoners Tuesday, though four refused to attend their hearings, said Navy Capt. Beci Brenton, a Pentagon spokeswoman. One other prisoner boycotted his hearing Monday. Their nationalities were not provided.

One detainee to appear Tuesday was a 47-year-old accused of belonging to a terrorist network called Dawa Wa Irhad, Borgquist said. He was accused of traveling to Afghanistan and supporting the Taliban.

A 24-year-old alleged Taliban fighter also appeared Tuesday. Borgquist said he traveled to Afghanistan in 2001 and allegedly received 10 days of weapons training before fighting against U.S. coalition forces, eventually surrendering to them.

The four who boycotted on Tuesday included three prisoners accused of ties to the Taliban and one allegedly linked to both the Taliban and al-Qaida, Brenton said.

The prisoner who boycotted on Monday was a 34-year-old arrested by Bosnian authorities on Oct. 18, 2002, on suspicion of being involved in a plot to attack the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo. He allegedly belonged to the Armed Islamic Group, an extremist organization with ties to al-Qaida, Borgquist said.

The review tribunals are meant to determine whether some 550 men at Guantanamo should be freed or are held properly as enemy combatants, a classification that affords fewer legal protections than prisoners of war.

So far, the review tribunals have heard some 157 cases. The panels have decided against releasing 88 prisoners, including 10 who were ordered to remain in custody Monday, Borgquist said.

Only one prisoner has been freed as a result of the reviews, a man from Pakistan. Sixty-three have boycotted the proceedings.