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Kuwait Times: Kuwaiti Gitmo detainee home but not yet freed.

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Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: The first Kuwaiti released from the US Navy's Guantanamo Bay camp for suspected terrorists arrived home early yesterday in good health, according to a Kuwaiti lobbying for the release of the detainees.

Nasser Al-Mutairi, 26, was captured in Afghanistan three years ago. Eleven other Kuwaitis remain in the camp in Cuba. Khaled Al-Odah, who heads a group that has been lobbying for the release or fair trial of Kuwaitis, told sources that Al-Mutairi returned to Kuwait aboard a government-owned plane. On his part, the lawyer of Kuwaiti Gitmo detainees, Abdurrahman Al-Haroun noted that the detainees had been expected to be released more than two and a half years earlier. "We do still urge the US administration to determine the fate of 11 more Kuwaitis still held in Gitmo," stressed Al-Haroun. Al-Mutairi had been deprived of his rights despite issuing an order from US Supreme Court in July 2004 mandating prison authorities to either trail the prisoners or free them, said Al-Shemmari. "Al-Mutairi's release gave a glimpse of hope to families of other Kuwait detainees still held in Gitmo," he added.

A press conference was held yesterday at the Kuwaiti Lawyers Association (KLA) that was attended by the head of the public committee for Kuwaiti Gitmo detainees families, Khaled Al-Odah; Kuwait Human Rights representative, Mubarak Al-Shemmari and the prisoner's brother Nayef. Khaled Al-Odah, who at the same time the father of detainee Fawzi Al-Oudah, said that Al-Mutairi had been released upon agreement between the governments of Kuwait and USA that all detainees who had not been charged were to be set free. "We are extremely happy for the return of Nasser," stressed Al-Odah congratulating his family and urging the US government to carry on prosecuting the remaining detainees or release them. Families of the other Kuwaiti prisoners have said the men were doing charity work in Afghanistan or in neighbouring Pakistan when they were detained after the US-led war against the Taleban and the Al-Qaeda network following the Sept 11 attacks.

Al-Mutairi's family insist that he was teaching English in Afghanistan and was not supporting that country's ousted Taleban regime or the Al-Qaeda terrorist network responsible for the Sept 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. Al-Odah, Al-Mutari's younger brother, Nayef, and several Kuwaiti government officials greeted the government-owned private plane after it returned the freed Guantanamo detainee to an airport, the identity of which was not revealed.

"Thank God I saw my brother," the former Guantanamo detainee's brother said in a telephone interview. "I am very happy. He looked fine and he was smiling." Al-Odah said Al-Mutairi was not handcuffed when he disembarked, after which he embraced his brother and was escorted away by officials.

Al-Mutairi will be "spending the night with the government," Al-Odah said, but it was unclear if or when he would be allowed to return home. State security authorities will interrogate Al-Mutairi with regards his activities

in Afghanistan, noting that he would be given the chance to meet his family soon enough. Journalists were not given access to his arrival. His sister, Maha, said the whole family was waiting excitedly by the phone at their home in the southern Kuwait City suburb of Sabahiya for a call from her freed brother. "We just want to hear his voice so that we can make sure he is here," Maha Al-Mutairi said.

Al-Mutair, aged 28, was an employee at the Education Ministry and a member of the Islamic Tableegh Group. He left for Afghanistan in 2000. Some 550 detainees from more than 40 countries are being held at Guantanamo Bay as "enemy combatants." Some 200 men have been released, many of who come from countries friendly to the United States, such as Britain, and some were ill.

Kuwait is a major ally of Washington in the Gulf. But many Muslim fundamentalists oppose the presence of US military here as well as American foreign policy. Human rights groups and defence attorneys complain the definition "enemy combatants" is vague and doesn't afford the legal protections assured a prisoner of war. Some men have been held without charge for more than three years. The US government had argued that enemy combatants held on foreign soil were not entitled to hearings in US courts. But it established the tribunals after the US Supreme Court ruled in June that prisoners could challenge their detention.

However, human rights advocates have called the reviews a sham, in part because prisoners are not allowed defence attorneys and are not advised of all evidence against them.