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Guantanamo Inmate Set for Germany Return: Magazine

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BERLIN (Reuters) - A Turkish man held since 2002 in the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay can expect to be released in the coming months and returned to his home in Germany, the German magazine Focus said on Saturday.

The German embassy in Washington was working to provide the security guarantees that the United States was demanding, such as continued surveillance, as a condition for the release of Murat Kurnaz, Focus said.

The magazine said Kurnaz could be freed by mid-year.

A government spokesman confirmed the German embassy was in talks with U.S. officials in a bid to end Kurnaz's detention.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who criticized the Guantanamo base before a trip to Washington last month, had discussed Kurnaz's case with U.S. President George W. Bush last month, the spokesman added.

Kurnaz, who was born in Germany in 1982 to Turkish parents and is a Turkish national, was in the process of becoming a German citizen when he was arrested in Pakistan in late 2001.

He was taken from there to Guantanamo, Cuba, where the United States is holding hundreds of men it suspects of backing Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda or Afghanistan's radical Islamist Taliban.

Kurnaz's German lawyer has said Kurnaz may have wanted to join the Taliban but was at most a "wannabe" militant, who had not taken part in armed conflict.

Kurnaz says he has suffered abuse at Guantanamo, where the United States has come under strong criticism from human rights groups for holding some 500 foreign terrorism suspects, many for as long as four years.

Those held in Guantanamo have been designated "enemy 3 combatants", a label which allows Washington to argue that they are not entitled to the rights accorded to prisoners of war under the terms of the Geneva Convention.