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US to Free Five Guantanamo Detainees -Group

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Reuters
November 1, 2005

KUWAIT - Five Kuwaitis will be released from Guantanamo Bay after more than three years in captivity, a private lobby group said.

The five detainees are among a dozen Kuwaiti men initially imprisoned at the U.S. military prison in Cuba during the 2001 U.S.-led war to oust al-Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks.

"Their release is confirmed. We could say they will be coming home in the next four days if nothing happens to the aircraft," Khaled al-Odah, chairman of Families of Kuwaiti Detainees at Guantanamo, told Reuters on Tuesday.

"Nobody can tell you the exact date they will arrive because it depends on the route of the aircraft," he added.

Odah declined to comment on whether the aircraft had left Kuwait.

Two of the soon-to-be-released Kuwaiti detainees are reported to be in critical health.

Designated as "enemy combatants" by the Pentagon, nearly 500 detainees of different nationalities have been held without charge, legal representation or trial.

An Interior Ministry source identified the five detainees as Adel al-Zamel, Mohammad al-Daihani, Abdullah al-Ajmi, Saad al-Azmi and Abdulaziz al-Shimmary.

Interior ministry sources said the detainees will be allowed to meet with their families before being taken into custody for interrogations by security officials.

One former Kuwaiti detainee Nasser al-Mutairi was released last January. He was later tried and acquitted of charges of undermining national security, weapons possession, joining al-Qaeda and trying to fight a friendly nation -- a reference to the United States.

Kuwait, a staunch U.S. ally, is a main transit route for American forces going to Iraq. It was the launch pad for the 2003 war on Iraq and up to 30,000 U.S. troops are based there.