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Three men get Guantanamo tribunal review

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- Two alleged members of the ousted Taliban regime and a man accused of links to the al Qaeda network appeared Saturday before review tribunals at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, an official said.

The first prisoner, a 36-year-old member of Taliban security forces, was accused of passing messages between senior al Qaeda members, said Navy Lt. Gary Ross, a spokesman for the Combatant Status Review Tribunals. He also allegedly attended meetings with top-level al Qaeda members.

The tribunals also heard from a 21-year-old member of the Taliban accused of forcing others at gunpoint to fight against U.S. and Afghan forces, Ross said. The prisoner allegedly tried to throw a hand grenade at U.S. forces to escape capture.

A 31-year-old prisoner accused of belonging to a terrorist organization with ties to al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden also appeared before a tribunal, Ross said. The military did not provide details on the terrorist group.

Although all three men spoke at their hearings, the military has not provided transcripts of statements made at the review tribunals. No names or nationalities were released.

The hearings are intended to decide whether the approximately 550 prisoners at Guantanamo are correctly held as "enemy combatants" or should be released. So far, one Pakistani prisoner has been freed and 143 prisoners have been ordered to remain held. Rulings are pending in 278 cases, while almost 130 prisoners have yet to go before the tribunals.

Prisoners classified as "enemy combatants" are afforded fewer legal protections than those considered prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions.

Human rights groups and defense lawyers have criticized the proceedings as unfair, in part because prisoners are not allowed attorneys present.

The government says the tribunals are administrative.