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U.S. Military Rules 8 Stay at Guantanamo

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - U.S. military review tribunals have ordered eight more men to remain held at the U.S. Naval outpost in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, an official said Tuesday.

The decisions came after Combatant Status Review Tribunals determined the prisoners were properly classified as "enemy combatants," said Navy Lt. Gary Ross, a spokesman for the tribunals.

The rulings brought to 143 the number of detainees ordered to remain held as a result of the tribunals, Ross said. Only one Pakistani prisoner has been freed. Rulings in 267 cases are pending, while some 140 have yet to be heard.

The military did not release details about the eight latest rulings.

The tribunals intend to determine whether all 550 Guantanamo detainees have been properly held as enemy combatants, a designation that affords fewer legal protections than that of a prisoner of war under the Geneva Conventions.

Human rights groups and defense attorney have complained that the tribunals are unfair because prisoners are not allowed attorneys present. Detainees, many of whom have been held for almost three years without charge, are only read unclassified portions of the allegations against them.

At least two men appeared before the tribunals Tuesday, while a third decided against attending, Ross said. No names or nationalities were released.

The first prisoner who attended was a 48-year-old suspected member of the al-Qaida terrorist network, Ross said. The prisoner fled Afghanistan after being wounded in a bombing, he said.

The second detainee, a 46-year-old suspected Taliban fighter, was accused of participating in an ambush against U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Ross said.

Both men spoke at their hearings, but the military has not released statements made at the tribunals.

The man who did not attend his hearing was accused of planning car bomb attacks against U.S. forces and providing shelter and money to many al-Qaida members, Ross said.

Nearly half the prisoners have refused to attend their hearings, but the military does not provide their reasons for doing so.