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U.S. Military Names More Enemy Combatants

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Associated Press
November 22, 2004

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico - U.S. military review tribunals have ordered five more prisoners to remain held as enemy combatants in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a Navy official said Saturday.

The decisions were made after the men appeared before Combatant Status Review Tribunals, which are intended to decide whether the approximately 550 detainees at the U.S. naval outpost in eastern Cuba are properly held as "enemy combatants" or should be freed, Navy Lt. Gary Ross said.

Of the 398 cases heard so far, 135 prisoners have been ordered held and one Pakistani prisoner has been freed, Ross said. Rulings on the rest are pending, though more than 150 cases have yet to be heard.

The military did not release details of the five latest decisions.

Prisoners classified as enemy combatants are afforded fewer legal protections than those categorized as prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions. Human rights groups and defense attorneys have criticized the review tribunals as unfair, partly because prisoners are not allowed to have lawyers present.

The government says the hearings are administrative.

At least three prisoners accused of links to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime or the al-Qaeda terror network appeared before review tribunals Saturday, while a fourth declined to attend, Ross said.

The military has not provided prisoners' individual reasons for refusing to attend their hearings. It also has not provided transcripts of oral statements made by those who attend.

On Nov. 8, a district court ruled that Salim Ahmed Hamdan - Osama bin Laden's driver - was entitled to a competent tribunal hearing to evaluate whether he qualified for POW status. Although the decision specifically concerned Hamdan, it could have implications for the future of the review tribunals.