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US military orders 3 detainees freed

25 others to stay at Guantanamo

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SAN JUAN -- The US military has ordered three detainees at the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to be freed and 25 others to remain as secret hearings were held for the cases of more terror suspects.

Hearings for two detainees were held Friday before the Administrative Review Boards, which can free prisoners if they determine they no longer pose a threat to the United States or hold significant intelligence value.

Twenty-two such hearings have been held at Guantanamo, said Navy Lieutenant Commander Daryl Borgquist, a Pentagon spokesman. The military has declined to provide details or allow media access to the proceedings.

The board hearings started as the military wrapped up Combatant Status Review Tribunals, intended to determine whether detainees were properly held as "enemy combatants," a classification they were given when they were captured and one that affords fewer legal protections than the Geneva Conventions.

The military declined to say how long the men had been held at the camp, what allegations they faced, or why the government ordered them held or released.

The decisions were announced as US District Judge Joyce Hens Green ruled that the review tribunals were unconstitutional because detainees were not allowed lawyers and were not allowed to hear classified information against them. She then halted legal proceedings pending a government appeal because her order conflicted with another federal judge's in a separate case.

The decision to free three detainees "doesn't change the fact that the process is unfair, but it does highlight the need for a fair process to determine how many other mistakes have been made," said Steven Shapiro, of the American Civil Liberties Union.

About 545 detainees are held at the US prison camp.