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Yemen to Try Ex-Guantanamo Prisoners

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SANAA, Yemen, Jan. 23 (UPI) -- Yemen will soon begin trying citizens held by the United States in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on charges of belonging to al-Qaida.

A source quoted in the pro-government daily September 26 said Monday the court specializing in terrorism cases will try six people on charges of operating for al-Qaida, including four who were repatriated from Guantanamo a year ago.

The source said among the defendants are Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal, also called Abu Asem al-Macci, and Ghaleb Zaidi, who were arrested in Sanaa in December 2003.

Al-Ahdal reportedly admitted during interrogation he received large amounts of money from overseas through intermediaries in Kuwait.

Al-Ahdal, believed to be the No. 2 al-Qaida man in Yemen after Sinan al-Harithy who was killed in a U.S. drone attack in eastern Yemen in 2002, said he distributed the money to the families of al-Qaida prisoners and detainees in Guantanamo.

The four other defendants who were handed over to Yemen by the U.S. authorities a year ago rejected accusations of being involved directly in terrorist activities, but acknowledged they have forged travel documents and identity cards for al-Qaida operatives.

The Yemeni government describes al-Ahdal as one of the most active and dangerous members of al-Qaida in Yemen. They said he was involved in fighting with al-Qaida in Chechnya and Afghanistan, where he was wounded and had his leg amputated.

After becoming disabled, al-Ahdal shifted from field action to the administration and financing of al-Qaida operations in Yemen.

Investigations by intelligence agencies revealed al-Ahdal was directly involved in bombings attacks in Yemen and terrorist plans which were aborted.