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Guantanamo detainees repatriated to Sudan

Megan Fincher | Dec. 19, 2013 NCR Today

Two Guantanamo Bay detainees were released to their native Sudan on Wednesday, according to the Defense Department [1], bringing the prisoner count down to 158.

Noor Uthman Muhammed, 46, and Ibrahim Idris, 52, were the last Sudanese prisoners at Guantanamo. Four other Guantanamo prisoners were repatriated earlier this month: two from Saudi Arabia and two from Algeria.

"President Obama remains deeply determined to close the detention facility at Guantanamo," National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice said at the Human Rights First Annual Summit [2] on Dec. 4.

"We have new envoys at the Departments of State and Defense dedicated to this cause. In August, we completed the first successful detainee transfers ... and we expect to announce more transfers in the near future."

Muhammed was imprisoned at Guantanmo for nine years before he pleaded guilty in 2011 "to conspiring with Al-Qaeda and providing material support for militants. He admitted he was a weapons trainer at the Khaldan paramilitary camp in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2000," according to Al-Jazeera [3]. In exchange for his guilty plea, Muhammed's sentence was reduced.

Idris was brought to Guantanamo the first day the prison opened in 2002 was never charged with a crime, according to the BBC [4]. Suffering from diabetes and schizophrenia, the latter causing auditory and visual hallucinations, Idris spent most of his time in Guantanamo's psychiatric ward.

In 2008, a U.S. military assessment "found Idris was one of Osama bin Laden's international couriers in the 1990s and later became a top doctor at al Qaeda's al Farouq training camp in Afghanistan," Reuters reported [5].

Idris "was ordered freed by a U.S. district judge" in October, five years after the military assessment, when "his lawyers argued he was too mentally and physically ill to pose a threat," Reueters stated.

Zeke Johnson, director of Amnesty International's Security with Human Rights Campaign, told the press that "half the people still held [at Guantanamo] are cleared to leave" and said he hoped Obama would "keep the momentum going by turning this week's trickle of transfers into a torrent."

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