

Pentagon Says Terror Suspect Has Been Moved to Guantanamo

Groups to Sue, Alleging Disappearance of Dozens Held by U.S.

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A Somali man who U.S. authorities allege has close ties to al-Qaeda operations in Africa was transferred to the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, this week, Defense Department officials announced yesterday, the third detainee to arrive at the prison in recent weeks.

Defense officials identified the man as Abdullahi Sudi Arale but provided scant information about him. They described him as a courier between al-Qaeda operatives in East Africa and Pakistan and said he "assisted extremists in acquiring weapons and explosives," as well as facilitating travel by providing false documents for al-Qaeda operatives and foreign fighters.

"The capture of Abdullahi Sudi Arale exemplifies the genuine threat that the United States and other countries face throughout the world from dangerous extremists," a Pentagon news release said. The release also suggested that interrogators can learn about terrorist operations in Africa by questioning Arale at Guantanamo Bay.

In bringing three detainees to Guantanamo since March, the Defense Department has signaled a willingness to keep approximately 385 detainees there in indefinite custody and to increase the population held there, despite bipartisan sentiment in favor of closing the facility. In September, President Bush ordered 14 high-value detainees to be moved from CIA secret prisons to Guantanamo, the first new detainees brought there since September 2004.

Navy Cmdr. J.D. Gordon, a Pentagon spokesman, said Arale was transferred to Guantanamo earlier this week and that he was captured recently in the Horn of Africa region. Gordon declined to offer more details. Arale was in U.S. custody overseas for an unspecified period of time before his transfer.

A group of human rights organizations plans to release a report today naming as many as 39 peo-

ple believed to have been taken into secret CIA custody and who have since disappeared. Arale is not among those listed. The report decries the Bush administration's secret imprisonment of those people and calls on the United States to end the program, acknowledge who is in secret custody and provide the International Committee of the Red Cross access to them.

Today, three of the groups — Amnesty International, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the International Human Rights Clinic at New York University — plan to file in federal court a lawsuit seeking documents and information about the people who have apparently disappeared. The suit is to be filed against several U.S. government agencies, including the Defense Department, the CIA and the Justice Department.

"The duty of governments to protect people from acts of terrorism is not in question," said Claudio Cordone, a senior director at Amnesty International. "But seizing men, women and even children, and placing people in secret locations deprived of the most ba-

sic safeguards for any detainees most definitely is."

ICRC officials hope to meet with Arale soon, at about the same time that they plan to meet with Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, the only other detainee at Guantanamo whom ICRC officials have not seen. ICRC representatives have met with all 14 detainees who were transferred to Guantanamo in September.

Arale may face a military tribunal in the coming months as part of the authorities' effort to verify whether he is, in fact, an enemy combatant. But it is unclear whether the military will proceed with its traditional tribunal process, which was called into question by two military judges at Guantanamo on Monday. For Arale to face a military commission on war crimes charges, he would have to be deemed an "unlawful enemy combatant," a designation the tribunals currently do not have as an option.

"We view him as an unlawful enemy combatant," Gordon said.

Staff researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.