

## **Kuwaiti lawyers urge court to acquit former inmates**

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**Associated Press** - 18 February, 2007

The lawyers of two Kuwaiti former Guantanamo Bay prisoners argued in court yesterday that there was no evidence to convict their clients of joining the Al Qaida or the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Omar Rajab Ameen and Abdullah Kamel Al Kundari were released from the US detention camp in September, but have since been detained for questioning and trial in their home country. At the start of trial earlier this month, they denied any terror connections.

"These are political, not criminal cases," attorney Mubarak Al Shimmiri told the court. "After September 11, 2001, every person involved in charity (work) in Afghanistan has been considered a terrorist." The prosecution claims the defendants have harmed Kuwait's political image by becoming members of Osama Bin Laden's terror group and joining the ranks of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime that hosted Al Qaida and fought US forces.

After the September 2001 terror attacks in the United States, Washington gave its support to the Northern Alliance Forces in Afghanistan, which overthrew the Taliban regime.

Kuwait has been a major US ally since the US-led 1991 Gulf War that liberated it from a seven-month Iraqi occupation under Saddam Hussain. "It is shameful that these men stay behind bars when there is no evidence to prove the accusations," said Khalid Al Abdul Jalil, another lawyer defending Ameen, 41, and Al Kundari, 32.

The suspects listened quietly from behind the bars of the court's deck. The Kuwait criminal court is expected to hand down its ruling in the case of the two on March 3.

The US military did not charge them with any crimes. According to military documents and David Cynamon, their attorney in Guantanamo, the two had ties to charities which were linked to terror groups and their names had been found on the hard drive of a computer seized from a suspected Al Qaida member.

But Cynamon has said the men only travelled to Afghanistan to help refugees from the country's civil war.

Six other Kuwaitis, formerly held at the Guantanamo prison, have been acquitted here of terror charges. Another four are still imprisoned at the US naval base in Cuba.