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Afghans freed from Guantanamo now in Kabul en route to home towns

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KABUL, March 16 (AFP) - Twenty-three Afghan nationals who have been freed from United States military detention in Guantanamo Bay have returned to Afghanistan and are staying in the Red Cross compound in Kabul, officials said Tuesday.

"I can confirm that 23 Afghans have been released," a spokesman for President Hamid Karzai, Jawad Ludin, said.

A spokeswoman for the International Committee for the Red Cross said the 23 Afghans were at the organisation's compound in the Afghan capital where they were awaiting return to their home villages.

Pentagon officials announced earlier Monday that 23 Afghan and three Pakistani nationals had been released from the detention centre.

"They no longer were deemed a threat and they no longer had intelligence value," Pentagon spokesman Major Michael Shavers said.

The releases come less than a week after five Britons were turned over to British authorities, flown to London and quickly released without charges.

More than 600 prisoners are being held as "enemy combatants" at Camp Delta, a maximum security prison at a US naval base at Guantanamo.

By the Pentagon's tally, 119 detainees have been released so far including three Afghan teenagers released in January.

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