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Swedish citizen at Guantanamo base released

The Swedish citizen who has been held at Guantanamo base in Cuba for more than two years has been released. He will now be flown home to Sweden.

The release of the Swedish citizen has been preceded by a series of contacts between the United States and Sweden, both between government agencies and at diplomatic level. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, for example, raised the issue with her American counterpart on her visit to Washington earlier this year. The Minister for Defence also discussed the matter when he visited Washington in the winter. Later, in April, the Prime Minister brought up the issue with President Bush. There have been intensive contacts between Sweden and the United States during the spring and summer in an attempt to reach a solution.

Sweden's basic position has been that the man must either be freed or be brought to court, in accordance with generally accepted legal principles.

In their contacts with representatives of the United States prior to the man's release, Swedish representatives have described the measures that Swedish law enforcement authorities may take when the man has returned to Sweden.

"It is highly gratifying that the Swedish citizen at Guantanamo has finally been released," says Minister for Foreign Affairs Laila Freivalds in a comment.

"Sweden is an active participant in the fight against international terrorism. To be conducted as effectively as possible, this fight is dependent on extensive international cooperation, not least in police matters. But it must not be conducted with means that lie outside the limits defined in the international legal system. That is why we in Sweden have been unable to accept individuals being held at Guantanamo with no legal basis. This has been the principle upon which we have acted," says Ms Freivalds.

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