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U.S. confirms it held 12 juveniles at Guantanamo

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — The U.S. has revised its count of juveniles ever held at Guantanamo Bay to 12, up from the eight it reported in May to the United Nations, a Pentagon spokesman said Sunday.

The government has provided a corrected report to the U.N. committee on child rights, according to Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Gordon. He said the U.S. did not intentionally misrepresent the number of detainees taken to the isolated Navy base in southeast Cuba before turning 18.

"As we noted to the committee, it remains uncertain the exact age of many of the juveniles held at Guantanamo, as most of them did not know their own date of birth or even the year in which they were born," he said.

A study released last week by the Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas concluded the U.S. has held at least a dozen juveniles at Guantanamo, including a Saudi who committed suicide in 2006.

"The information I got was from their own sources, so they didn't have to look beyond their own sources to figure this out," said Almerindo Ojeda, director of the center at the University of California, Davis.

Rights groups say it is important for the U.S. military to know the real age of those it detains because juveniles are entitled to special protection under international laws recognized by the United States.

Eight of the 12 juvenile detainees identified by the human rights center have been released, according to the study.

Two of the remaining detainees are scheduled to face war-crimes trials in January. Canadian Omar Khadr, now 21, was captured in July 2002 and is charged with murder for allegedly throwing a grenade that killed a U.S. special forces soldier. Mohammed Jawad, an Afghan who is about 24, faces attempted murder charges for a 2002 grenade attack that wounded two U.S. soldiers.

The study identified the only other remaining juvenile as Muhammed Hamid al Qarani of Chad.

The Saudi who hanged himself with two other detainees in 2006, Yasser Talal al-Zahrani, was 17 when he arrived at Guantanamo within days of the military prison opening in January 2002, according to the study.

Every day

About 250 prisoners remain at Guantanamo on suspicion of terrorism or links to al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

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