

Beat: Local

Bahrain arrests 2 ex-Guantanamo Bay detainees on terror charges

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USPA News - Two Gulf citizens who were previously detained at the controversial Guantanamo Bay detention facility were arrested in Bahrain on Saturday on suspicion of preparing a terrorist attack, officials said on Sunday, but only few details were released. The two men, whose identities and nationalities were not immediately disclosed, were arrested at a border station on the King Fahad Causeway when they tried to enter Bahrain from Saudi Arabia with forged passports.

Both persons were also found to be carrying "a large amount" of money. Bahrain's Interior Ministry said the men had previously been detained at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility in Cuba, which is operated by U.S. forces and remains open despite U.S. President Barack Obama ordering its closure within 12 months in January 2009. And while 164 people remain imprisoned nearly five years later, only a handful of them are facing charges. "The initial investigation revealed that the arrestees are former detainees of the Guantanamo detention center. They are suspected of plotting a terror act to jeopardize the security and safety of Bahrain," the General Director of Crime Detection and Forensic Science said. "The investigation continues to reveal more information." The police official noted that the arrests came just days before Bahrain hosts the 32nd meeting of GCC Interior Ministers, but he did not say whether the suspects may have wanted to target the meeting. "Legal procedures are being taken to refer the case to the public prosecution," he added. Security forces in the kingdom have been on alert since February 2011 when scores of people took to the streets to demand reform and the introduction of a constitutional monarchy, but they later began to call for the removal of the royal family. Bahrain is ruled by the Sunni Muslim al-Khalifa family, even though two-thirds of its population is Shiite. In the weeks after the social unrest began, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait deployed their troops to Bahrain to reinforce a massive armed crackdown on the popular uprising. At least 35 people were killed during the initial protests, hundreds were arrested and thousands were injured in the government-authorized violence. In November 2011, the Bahraini government admitted in a statement that it used 'excessive force' against pro-democracy protesters and mistreated detainees during protests. "We cannot condone mistreatment and abuses by our officials. There will be no impunity. All those responsible for abuses will be held accountable," the Bahrain Information Affairs Authority said at the time.

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