

U.S. Department of Justice

IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE – EASTERN REGION OFFICE

STATEMENT

12/14/1999 1:08 PM

INS WORKS WITH ST. MARTINS PARISH SHERIFF TO RESOLVE HOSTAGE INCIDENT

**Contact: Michael W. Gilhooly
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New Orleans, Louisiana -- Officers from the New Orleans District Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service are supporting Sheriff Charles Fuselier and his staff as they attempt to resolve the hostage situation at the Parish Jail. The incident remains under the jurisdiction of the St. Martins Parish Sheriff's Department, but INS officers are on the scene to offer support and advice on immigration related issues.

Acting District Director Roy Schremp said, "We join with Sheriff Fuselier in working towards a peaceful resolution to this hostage incident." Schremp explained that the INS has an intergovernmental agreement with the Sheriff's Department to house individuals who are being detained on immigration charges.

Five of the six individuals involved with the hostage situation are INS detainees. The sixth individual is being held on state charges. Due to the sensitive nature of the negotiations the Immigration Service will not release information on the individuals at this time. Schremp stated, "Immigration Officers join with members of the Louisiana law enforcement community in seeking a peaceful resolution to the incident."

-INS-

U.S. Department of Justice
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

Internal Questions and Answers

1- Question: What is the INS doing to assist county and state authorities in resolving the hostage situation at the St. Martinville Parish Correctional Center.

Answer: Officers from New Orleans District Office of INS are working closely with the St. Martins Parish Sheriff's Department, the Louisiana State Police and the FBI to resolve the situation. The incident remains under the jurisdiction of the St. Martins Parish Sheriff Department. INS officers are offering support and advice on immigration related issues. Everyone involved is committed to doing everything they can to bring about a peaceful resolution to the situation.

2- Q: Are all of the individuals involved Cuban nationals?

A: Yes.

3- Q: Are all of the individuals involved in the hostage situation INS detainees?

A: No, five of the individuals are being held on immigration charges the other individual is being held on state criminal charges.

4- Q: Why are INS detainees being held in a Louisiana Parish Jail?

A: INS has an intergovernmental agreement with the Sheriff's Department to hold immigration detainees.

5- Q: What are the charges against the Cuban detainees?

A: (for use if **NOT CLEARED** to talk about criminal records) Due to the sensitive nature of ongoing negotiations with the hostage takers we are not discussing their immigration status. We can say they are being detained on immigration charges.

A: (for use if **CLEARED** to talk about criminal records) Five of the six hostage takers are being held on Federal immigration violations. The sixth, who is also a Cuban national, is being held on state criminal charges. The five hostage takers being held on federal immigration violations are considered by INS to be "Criminal Aliens." These are aliens who have been convicted of crimes, which make them removable to their home country under immigration law. In the case of Cuban nationals, INS is unable to remove criminal aliens because their home country refuses to accept them. Under federal law INS is required to detain Criminal aliens whose release is a threat to the community. INS does have an annual review process for detained aliens who cannot be removed from the United States. During that process INS considers whether an individual can be release into the community on conditions. The primary concern in that review process in protecting public safety.

6-Q: Who are the hostage takers, how long has INS detained them and what were they convicted of?

A: (for use if **NOT CLEARED** to talk about criminal records) Due to the sensitive nature of ongoing negotiations with the hostage takers we cannot discuss their immigration status. We can say they are being detained on immigration charges.

Change Header to Reflect Headline

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A: (for use if CLEARED to talk about criminal records) The five who are being held by INS are:

Juan Miranda Salot -- His criminal convictions include possession of a firearm in prison, forcible rape, burglary and robbery. He has been in INS custody since January of 1995.

Gerardo Santana Morales -- His criminal arrests include kidnapping and rape. He has been convicted of robbery. He has been in INS custody since August of 1998.

Lazaro Orta Elisalte -- His criminal convictions include drug sales, resisting arrest and homicide. He has been in INS custody since March of 1997.

Jonne Ponte-Landrian -- His criminal convictions include resisting arrest, burglary and aggravated assault on a police officer. He has been in INS custody since February of 1992.

Roberto Villar-Grana -- His criminal convictions include drug sales, resisting arrest and assault. He has been in INS custody since January 1997.

For information on the sixth individual, being held on state charges, contact state or local officials.

7-Q: The detainees claim they have been incarcerated for years without having any trial or hearing. Is that true?

A: All the individuals involved in this situation have exercised their rights in immigration court. They are being detained because INS has a responsibility to protect public safety.

8-Q: Why is INS detaining criminal aliens if their countries refuse to accept their repatriation?

A: The INS has the authority, under the statute, to detain anyone who presents a threat to the community pending repatriation to their home country. However, INS continues to review the custody status of long term detainees (those in INS custody whose countries will not accept repatriation) to determine their eligibility for release.

9-Q: How many detainees are being held at the St. Martinville Parish Correctional Center by INS?

A: INS is currently housing 72 detainees there, 60 of who are Cuban.

-INS-

Irene Bueno

12/14/99 10:11:40 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Scott Busby/NSC/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: Cuban Detainees Article

cuban detainees hold warden
in Louisiana jail uprising

December 13, 1999

Web posted at: 8:56 PM EST (0156 GMT)

ST. MARTINVILLE, Louisiana
(CNN) -- Five Cuban prisoners were holding a Louisiana jail warden and three correctional officers hostage early Tuesday after an uprising that began when at least one inmate pulled a homemade knife on a guard.

There were no immediate reports of injuries in the disturbance, which began Monday evening.

One hostage was released after about six hours: FBI and state hostage negotiators were holding talks with the five Cuban nationals to try to get the others released.

"We're trying to work out the situation," said Capt. Audrey Thibodeaux, a spokeswoman for the St. Martin Parish Sheriff's Department.

The five Cuban nationals were being held there on behalf of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Thibodeaux said. She did not know why the five were detained.

"They're detainees and we house them," she said.

Thibodeaux said the hostages were taken in an "uprising" that began around 4 p.m. Monday, when the five Cuban nationals left a rooftop exercise area.

A man claiming to be a hostage-taker called CNN's Miami bureau, saying that the hostages were being held in three areas -- the warden's office, a control room and another room, which he did not identify.

Asked why the hostages were taken, he said, "It was repression. It was imprisonment for nothing. We have no

choice.

"We want the news to go around the whole world," the caller said. "We want the government to know what is happening."

He would not say how the hostages were taken, but would only say, "We have them, we have them." Asked what their demands were, the man -- who would not disclose his name -- said, "We want to get out of this country."

The jail houses 160 inmates in a two-story building in downtown St. Martinville, about 75 miles west of New Orleans. The sheriff's office is located on the first floor.

Thibodeaux said the incident was confined to inside the facility. She said officials were committed to "resolving the issue without injury ... in as peaceful way as we can."

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Cuban refugees attack when boat is intercepted

The Washington Times

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1999

MIAMI (Reuters) — Cuban refugees threatened a Coast Guardsman with machetes and were subdued with pepper spray in the latest conflict during an attempt to keep Cuban boat people from entering the United States illegally, the Coast Guard said yesterday.

The Cubans' 15-foot wooden sailboat capsized during the melee on Sept. 28, throwing all seven of the refugees into the water. They eventually were taken aboard a Coast Guard cutter unharmed, interviewed by U.S. immigration officials and returned to Cuba.

"We were fortunate no one was killed, either our officer or his attackers," said Coast Guard Lt. Ron LaBrec.

"This violence must stop before a tragedy occurs. Continued aggression against Coast Guardsmen will not help illegal migrants reach the United States. It only places everyone on scene at greater risk," Lt. LaBrec said.

A Coast Guard cutter intercepted the sailboat 400 yards south of Key Largo, moving between the boat and the shore to block its path. When Coast Guard crewmen tried to stop the sailboat by pulling down its rigging, two Cubans tried to hit them with long poles and another swung a machete at an officer, missing him by only inches, officials said.

The Guardsman used pepper spray on the man with the machete and on another Cuban who was trying to strike another Guardsman with a 12-inch knife.

The other five Cubans moved to

the same side of the boat, capsizing it and dumping all seven into the water, the Coast Guard said. Guardsmen threw them life jackets and life rings. Two grabbed the rings and were taken aboard, but the others threw the life jackets back and brandished their machetes, the Coast Guard said.

The others grabbed an inflated inner tube and tried to swim to shore, but gave up after several more Coast Guard and Florida Marine Patrol vessels arrived and deflated the inner tube with a knife. Four continued to threaten the officers aboard the Coast Guard vessel and were held in handcuffs, the service said.

The seven were returned to Cuba, along with three other Cubans picked up in a rowboat near Key West Thursday.

Under U.S. immigration policy, Cubans intercepted at sea while trying to enter the United States illegally are usually returned to their communist-ruled homeland, while those who reach shore are usually allowed to stay.

The policy has provoked increasingly violent shoreline stand-offs between Cubans trying to enter the country illegally and Coast Guard crews trying to stop them.

A similar confrontation was broadcast live on Miami television stations in June, sparking demonstrations by Cuban exiles and prompting a Coast Guard investigation. In that incident, the Coast Guard used pepper spray and fire hoses to try to keep six Cubans from swimming ashore.

Briefly

Micmacs, whites clash over fishing rights

BURNT CHURCH, New Brunswick — Tensions in Canada's lobster fishery remained high yesterday after Micmac Indians set fire to pickup trucks and attacked the homes of white fishermen over the weekend in retaliation for the destruction of thousands of Indian lobster traps.

The violence, which left one Micmac seriously injured and property damage in the thousands of dollars, was the most serious to date in a running battle over native fishing rights on Canada's east coast.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien appealed for calm yesterday in the growing battle that was sparked when the country's highest court ruled recently that Indians have the right to fish out of season.

U.S. blocks Cuba talks of Hemingway scholars

HAVANA — The United States is preventing some 100 Hemingway scholars from traveling to Cuba for a seminar marking the centennial of the Nobel Prize-winning writer's birth, the seminar's organizer said yesterday.

The Treasury Department has refused permission for the scholars to attend the Oct. 10-15 event at the Finca Vigia, Hemingway's former home converted into a museum, museum director Danilo Arrate told Prensa Latina news agency.

Ernest Hemingway lived in Cuba for nearly 20 years until his expulsion after the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro.

Mahogany logger fined under Brazil's new law

BRASILIA, Brazil — A timber company has been fined \$366,000 for illegally cutting mahogany trees in the Amazon, the Brazilian Environmental Institute said.

The fine is the largest ever levied in Brazil under a new environmental protection law that allows for economic sanctions and civil lawsuits to be brought against violators.

"With the new Environmental Crimes Law, authorities are in a much stronger position to combat irresponsible timber companies destroying the Amazon," said prosecutor Felicio Pontes Jr.

In addition to the fine against the Carvalho timber company, authorities seized 45,500 cubic feet of mahogany that was cut illegally. Company owner Armando Carvalho told police he had a license to cut mahogany. He vowed not to pay the fine and to regain the seized wood.

Weekly notes . . .

President Clinton will attend the Panama Canal turnover ceremony in Panama Dec. 14, says Foreign Minister Jose Aleman. Under the 1977 Torrijos-Carter treaty, Washington is to give Panama control of the canal and pull out all U.S. troops from the country by Dec. 31, 1999. The ceremony is being held 2½ weeks before that because few foreign leaders could be expected in Panama on the last day of 1999. . . . In an autobiography published last week, Argentine President Carlos Menem depicts himself as statesman, sportsman and womanizer, but says he gave up his amorous pursuits after his son was killed in a 1995 helicopter crash. "Love never seemed an excess to me. . . . Life is made up of passions. . . . To seduce, to distrust, to abandon and be abandoned: It is all in the end an inexplicable series of instincts," the 69-year-old divorcee wrote in "Universes of My Time."

Cubans. 7/22/99

#5 +

- Cutting in smaller groups, stayed longer - to look like they just arrived to get a more sympathetic response

~~the~~

Outlaw - Cub. determined to maintain outflow, inform Coast Guard.
Cub. try to discourage them, have publicized not opening doors.

~~6/29~~ 6/29 -

C.G. - release report next week
- outside investigation

DOJ/INS - 16 is ~~being~~ conducting to review
B.P. has been assigned.

Intel Collection

DOJ/INS - Border Patrol, Intel, all feeding to FL
CG - capture info + transmit to INS.

Public Info Campaign on Cuban Am entry - Cuba - late next wk.
PSA - anti-smuggling campaign - INS
Outreach

Medical Policy

Any change in policy bringing in a sick person to hospital? ~~INS~~ DOJ/INS

Any change in policy bringing in immediate relatives - key case except that
PHS - surgeon - are in known ~~case~~ CINS has numberable ~~case~~ (PHS)

Resistant in 3rd countries (Cuba) -
Bolivia, the Uruguay, Spain, etc.

Increase in Legal Flow

- CAG exercise parole authority).
- Lottery ~~531K~~ 531K registered + family members
- INS + State could not be high enough to slow down unloc. migration.
- New lottery - agreed to arrive in 2001
- 2/3 are working aged men - eco migrants not fleeing persecution.
- 70% migrants are ~~not~~ smuggled
- Pull factors.
- NO

Instituting (Removal Effort) (a change in dry boots wet foot policy)

- Cuban does not want migrants who have been here a certain period of time after they migrate here live in US
- How long can we let return ~~into~~ to Cuba.
- Detention - a political + resource problem
- US + DUT - cannot set subcategories
- Cuba takes next only in the
(of Cuban)

In 1996 - subject to exclusion

Cubans Now Choosing Smugglers Over Rafts

A1

By RICK BRAGG

MIAMI, July 20 — They used to be called balseros — Spanish for “rafters” — after the rickety crafts of plywood, inner tubes and empty oil drums they launched from the beaches of Cuba, praying that the homemade boats would hold together long enough to cross the treacherous Florida Straits.

They struggled ashore in the Florida Keys, at Palm Beach and on barrier islands in between, sunburned, half starved, dehydrated, telling stories of circling sharks and loved ones who vanished when their crafts came apart in the waves. In

Miami, there are monuments to the ones who just disappeared.

Others, like Ray Dieppa, piled into fishing boats crowded with sick, terrified adults and sobbing children, and pushed off into uncertainty. Mr. Dieppa remembers gazing into the pitch-black night, almost 20 years ago, and wondering if he would ever see the United States.

“I am against the communist regime,” he said, when asked why he

had risked that passage.

It has not been that simple for a long time.

In the heaviest exodus since President Fidel Castro allowed 33,000 people to leave Cuba in 1994, more than 1,500 Cubans have made it ashore in South Florida so far this year. But increasingly, United States Coast Guard officials say, the Cubans are making their passage not on rafts or in fishing vessels but in the boats of smugglers, who bring them in close enough to swim ashore or launch a small dinghy.

The cost: as much as \$8,000 per

person.

In the same period, more than 1,000 Cubans have been stopped at sea and forced to return to their homeland in compliance with the so-called “wet-foot, dry-foot” policy that President Clinton put in place after the 1994 exodus. That policy allows Cubans who make it to United States shores to apply, ultimately, for asylum, but sends those picked up at sea back to Cuba. In all of 1998, 1,047 Cubans were stopped by the Coast Guard.

The policy, part of an agreement with President Castro to halt the 1994 exodus, has led to high drama at sea and on the beaches of South Florida, as Cubans try almost anything, including threatened self-immolation and suicide, to hold off the Coast Guard long enough to put at least a foot on dry sand.

“We had an incident a month ago in which a woman threatened to drown her baby if the Coast Guard crew members came closer,” said Glenn Rosenholm, assistant district public affairs officer for the Coast Guard.

“This is not normal, not usual,” Mr. Rosenholm said. “These are very, very volatile situations.”

Increasing Poverty And Desperation

Life in Cuba has become increasingly difficult, because of both poverty and politics, recent arrivals say, so people are more desperate to flee.

José Martínez, 34, was one of the lucky ones. He reluctantly conceded that he was smuggled into South Florida in October with six others, for \$8,000 each. But he does not apologize for doing anything that he could to leave Cuba.

Mr. Martínez said he and his relatives lived in a deteriorating house, without running water, in a neighborhood where, he said, informants turned in people who spoke against the Government, and sometimes even those who did not.

The story is well-worn in Cuban Miami, repeated with every boatload.

When he recalls life in Cuba, Mr. Martínez said, “I feel like crying.”

It is no wonder, he and Cuban-Americans here say, that people will do almost anything to leave their island and cannot meekly accept being sent back, especially when they are in sight of land.

In the past few weeks, confrontations between the Coast Guard and the people they stop at sea and turn back have turned ugly.

Earlier this month, a Cuban doused himself, his boat and others in it with gasoline and threatened to set everyone on fire if the Coast Guard did not let him reach shore.

In the past two weeks, two groups of Cubans in small boats have jumped into the water, some miles from shore, instead of giving up to the Coast Guard.

On Friday, several men jumped into the water off Islamorada in the Florida Keys, saying they would rather drown than be sent back. They had to be rescued by Coast Guardsmen.

“They know they have to make it to land,” said Cheryl Little, executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center. “When they’re getting this close, they’re desperate. We can expect desperate people to do desperate things.”

In just one day this past weekend, 56 Cubans made it ashore, some posing for photographs before heading to what has usually been a temporary detention with the immigration service. In the same 24-hour period, 24 Cubans were stopped at sea, some in sight of land, and sent home.

The most publicized landfall came on June 29 just off Surfside, north of Miami Beach, when six Cubans on a small boat were blasted by a Coast

Guard water cannon as news helicopter thundered overhead, broadcasting live footage of the drama to Miami television stations, which interrupted afternoon soap operas with the story.

As the men tried to swim the 200 yards to shore, Coast Guardsmen shot pepper spray into their faces, as the cameras rolled and hundreds gathered on the beach, cheering the swimmers on. Two Cubans made it ashore, one running between the police before diving onto the sand.

A demonstration soon blocked a main causeway from Miami to Miami Beach, and more than 1,000 demonstrators marched on the adjacent Coast Guard office, chanting “Assassins!” As traffic jammed, Coast Guard officials relented, allowing the four other Cubans, who had been picked up in the water, to seek political asylum.

Less than a day later, all six were released from custody and were on the streets of Miami, being feted. On Independence Day, they shared a seafood dinner with Miami’s Mayor, Joe Carollo.

Sympathy Still Won Despite New Method

As the six were being greeted as heroes against communism, the United States Border Patrol questioned why the men, who said they had rowed all the way from Cuba on a 14-foot boat, had shown no signs of dehydration or exposure, and their hands had no splinters or calluses.

Less than a week after they landed, a Miami artist fashioned a sculpture of a man diving for the sand and freedom as two police officers closed in. It was erected on the site of the Surfside confrontation.

“People are more sympathetic to the Cubans that arrive by themselves, struggling with a raft, than Cubans who arrive with a suntan and well-fed,” said Jaime Suchlicki, director of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami.

But that is not a major issue in a Cuban American-dominated Miami, Mr. Suchlicki said.

Some, including a Cuban doctor who recently made it to Florida grimy and exhausted, are still coming the old-fashioned way, on their own boats. But while the ones who pay smugglers to deliver them are not regarded with quite the same hero status as those who made it on their own, there is little condemnation of them here in the Cuban community, where the hatred of Mr. Castro colors everything.

In fact, immigration officials say, the one-time rafters who came here years ago are largely financing the new wave of migrants.

Elena Freyre, executive director of the Miami office of the Cuban Committee for Democracy, said Cuban-Americans in Miami were largely footing the bill for this new migration, paying the smugglers to bring their relatives from Cuba. Most of the smugglers are probably of Cuban descent, Ms. Freyre said.

Some new arrivals have said they paid their own way, having saved for years.

And while many Cuban-Americans may still refer to them as balseros, they sometimes do so with a smile.

Mr. Dieppa said that it was wrong for the smugglers to make money off such suffering, but that he, like many others here, would accept what they saw as a lesser evil.

“If my family could afford it, I would want them to try,” said Mr. Dieppa, now an editor at a South Florida television station, who still has family in Cuba.

Just because smugglers are bringing them in, it is no guarantee of a safe trip, Mr. Martínez said.

While some here in Miami wonder if the steady trickle of Cubans is a sign of another exodus like in 1994, experts on Cuban immigration say they doubt if it will get that large.

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"This will die," Mr. Suchlicki said. "I don't think it's a permanent situation. It has to do with the toughening political situation."

A Reaction To Lost Freedoms

The present exodus is also attributed to a general feeling that small freedoms won after Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba last year have been taken away. Small business, vendors and even prostitutes have been forced to close up shop and every boat of refugees brings another story of increasing punishment and tightening Government control.

Another mass exodus can only come with Mr. Castro's blessing, said Steve Schnably, professor of International Law at the University of Miami. "If he makes it clear at any time that people can just leave the island, then you will have an exodus," Mr. Schnably said.

Cuba has already moved to quash the exodus, according to the state-controlled newspaper Granma, which said in an editorial: "Every desire to leave the country by safe and legal means will be permitted. Attempts by illegal means will categorically not be allowed."

Experts on immigration say the United States policy almost guarantees future altercations at sea, not only with the Cubans but also with Haitians who are still trying to make the sea passage to Florida. The Haitian economy is in shambles, and



Nuri Valibona/Miami Herald

People gathered on the beach off Surfside, Fla., on June 29, as a rafter made it ashore after dodging a water cannon and pepper spray fired by Coast Guardsmen. President Clinton condemned the Coast Guard action.

people there are, if anything, worse off than the Cubans, Haitian advocates said.

As for Cuban advocates in Miami, the once white-hot reaction to the Coast Guard's actions has cooled in the past few weeks.

"The Coast Guard is trapped in a

difficult situation," said Ramon Saul Sanchez, a delegate with Movimiento Democracia in Miami, an anti-Castro group. But, Mr. Sanchez said, "the politics of applying migration laws have to be revised to become more humane."

In Miami, though, all the blame for

most things sad and Cuban ultimately ends up at Mr. Castro's foot.

As long as he rules, said Ninoska Perez, a spokeswoman for the Cuban American National Foundation, the balseros will keep coming.

"A dictator of 40 years," she said, "does not change."

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 1999

2/2



IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL COVER SHEET

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NUMBER OF PAGES TO FOLLOW: 2

MESSAGE: FYI

FROM: Cathy St. Denis, Counselor to the Commissioner
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STATEMENT

7/2/99

Statement by

Doris Meissner

Commissioner

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) are investigating allegations that six Cuban nationals were verbally abused and subjected to inappropriate behavior by INS employees while being processed at the Pembroke Pines Station of the U.S. Border Patrol on Wednesday.

Immediately after receiving reports of the incident, the Miami Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol began the inquiry. As a result of this initial review and until this matter is resolved, an INS officer has been temporarily assigned to duties which do not involve contact with INS detainees.

In accordance with established DOJ procedures, information on this incident has been provided to the DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department in Washington, D.C. INS' Office of Internal Audit is working with these other offices to review this information, and will cooperate fully with any investigation initiated by the Justice Department.

INS does not condone or in any way tolerate unprofessional behavior on the part of its employees. We hold our employees to the very highest ethical standards, and we expect our employees to protect the rights and the dignity of individuals in our custody. We take allegations of misconduct and inappropriate behavior very seriously, and when allegations are substantiated, we take prompt action regarding misconduct or systemic problems that may require action.

- INS -



Department of Justice

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**STATEMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
AND DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - This week, six Cuban migrants alleged that they were verbally abused and mistreated while in the custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Attorney General Janet Reno and Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder today issued the following statement:

"We are aware of, and deeply troubled by, the allegations that six refugees have made about the way they were treated while in custody in Pembroke Pines, Florida this week.

"There is no room for abusive conduct among the ranks of our law enforcement personnel. We take these, and all such allegations, extremely seriously. We have therefore referred the matter to the Office of Inspector General. The Civil Rights Division will also review the allegations.

"We will simply not tolerate abuse of individuals in our custody and will take the strongest possible measures in response to all such allegations.

"Additionally, pending the outcome of the investigation, INS Commissioner Meissner has temporarily assigned an INS officer involved in the matter to duties which do not involve contact with detainees. She has also committed the resources of the INS Office of Internal Audit to assist in this investigation."

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