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1400:prisoners:

1982
by Lionel Martin

havana, dec 29, reuter -- andres vargas gomez, a cuban political prisoner was released from a penitentiary here after serving twenty years of a thirty year sentence in what is viewed as the prelude to further releases of political prisoners, a highly informed western diplomatic source said today.

the cuban government has not announced the release which took place last saturday.

the source said that vargas gomez will be allowed to join his wife who lives in the united states.

a relative of a political prisoner now serving time in a cuban jail told reuter that prisoners had been led to believe by prison authorities that some of them would be released shortly.

the diplomatic source said that vargas gomez was a leader of the anti-castro democratic revolution front. two weeks before the bay of pigs invasion in april 1961, the source said, he entered cuba from florida illegally to organize fifth column activities.

following the defeat of the cia-sponsored invasion, vargas gomez sought asylum in the ecuadorean embassy in havana but was arrested when he attempted to flee the country. in august 1962, the source said, he was sentenced to death. his sentence was later commuted to thirty years in prison.

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the source explained that vargas gomez was a +planted+ prisoners who refused to cooperate with prison authorities. amnesty international, in its 1982 report, fixed the number of +planted+ political prisoners at 240.

+planted prisoners+ refuse to wear clothes issue by authorities or to take part in the rehabilitation plan which would require them to work in construction and other trades for a montly wage. according to ex-inmates, +planted+ prisoners receive none of the privileges afforded to other prisoners in cuban jails and are isolated from them.

vargas gomex is the grandson of maximo gomez, one of the principal military heros of cuba's war for independence against spain in the final part of the last century.

last october, armando valladares, one of cuba's most famous political prisoners was released after twenty-two years in jail following an appeal to president fidel castro by french president francois mitterand.

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most of cuba's political prisoners were released in 1980 and allowed to go to the united states and other nations with their families. the release of more than three thousand men and women charged with counterrevolutionary activities, came after a dialogue between cuban officials and representatives of the cuban exile community in miami. +planted+ prisoners were not included in the general amnesty granted at that time.

in november 1982, amnesty international said that thirty seven political prisoners were given additional sentences after completing their 15 to 20 year terms. it said that eleven of them stage a hunger strike at boniato prison in easter cuba.

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