UU GMW BAS LCT

PO: POLITICAL PRISONERS 1986

RR-86-116

U.S. OFFICIALS IN HAVANA TO SCREEN POLITICAL PRISONERS:

HAVANA,AUG,20, REUTERS- OFFICIALS OF THE U.S. IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE AND THE U.S. STATE DEPARTAMENT WILL BEGIN INTERVIEWING A GROUP OF CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES THIS WEEK TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES, A SPOKESMAN AT THE U.S. INTERESTS SECTION IN HAVANA TOLD REUTERS TODAY.

THE PRISONERS ARE BEING RELASED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF AN APPEAL MADE TO CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO BY THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS. IN EARLY 1985 A DELEGATIONOF U.S. BISHOPS VISITING HAVANA HANDED CASTRO THE NAMES OF SEVENTY FIVE PRISONERS WHOSE FREEDOM IT SOUGHT.

THE CUBAN LEADER AGREED TO ORDER THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS AND ALLOW THEM TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES WITH THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES IN WHAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT DESCRIBED AS ''A GESTURE OF GOODWILL.''

THE U.S. IMMIGRATION AND STATE DEPARTAMENT OFFICIALS WILL ALSO INTERVIEW FAMILY MEMBERS OF A GROUP OF 26 POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO WERE RELEASED AND FLEW TO THE U.S. FOLLOWING A MEATING OF THE REVEREND JESSE JACKSON WITH FIDEL CASTRO IN JUNE 1984 IN HAVANA.

MORE LEM/LES

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POL: POLITICAL PRISONERS = 2 HAVANA:

RR-86-1161

ACCORDING TO DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN HAVANA, THE PRISONERS WHO ARE DEEMED ELIGIBLE FOR ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ARRIVE IN MIAMI WITHIN THREE WEEKS. THE SOURCES SAID THAT IN A PRELIMINARY SCREENING, 18 OF THE PRISONERS SAID THEY WOULD PREFER TO REMAIN IN CUBA WHEN RELEASED FROM JAIL.

MONSIGNOR NICHOLAS DIMANZIO OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION OF THE U.S. NATIONAL BISHOPS' CONFERENCE ARRIVED IN HAVANA TODAY TO COORDINATE PLANS FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE PRISONERS AND THEIR RECEPTION IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE U.S. INTERESTS SECTION SPOKESMAN SAID THE U.S. OFFICIALS SENT FROM WASHINGTON TO OVERSEES THE INTERVIEWS WILL NOT DISCUSS THE BROADER PICTURE OF CUBAN IMMIGRATION WITH FIDEL CASTRO'S GOVERNMENT.

''THEY WILL DEAL EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE MATTER OF ASCERTAINING THE ELEBILILITY OF THE PROSPECTIVE EMIGREES TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES'' THE SPOKESMAN SAID. HE ADDED THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO PROVIDE THE RECORDS OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS TO THE UNITED STATES GEVERNMENT.

==MORE LEM/LES

RR-86-116

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POL: POLITICAL PRISONERS= 3 HAVANA:

A BROADER IMMIGRATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA WHICH WAS SIGNED IN DECEMBER 1984 WAS UNILATERALLY SUSPENDED BY CUBA WHEN THE RADIO FREE-EUROPE TYPE STATION, RADIO MARTI, BEGAN BROADCASTING TO CUBA IN MAY 1985. THE AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED FOR THE DEPARTURE OF MORE THAN 20,000 CUBAN A YEAR TO THE UNITED STATE. IT ALSO CALLED FOR THE GRADUAL RETURN OF 2700 UNDESIRABLE CUBAN EXILES WHO ARRIVED IN THE UNITED STATES DUPING THE MASSIVE MARIEL BOATLIFT EXODUS OF MID 1980
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