

Cuba accused of denying U.S. exit permits

Secretary of State charges Cuba with inhumane behavior for refusing to let its citizens migrate to America.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright accused Cuba on Monday of arbitrarily denying exit permits to Cubans with U.S. visas, thereby separating families and forcing would-be immigrants to attempt high-risk escapes by boat.

In a statement, Albright said Cuba's actions violated agreements with the United States, international standards and "fundamental human decency."

She said she ordered a formal protest lodged with Cuba's diplomatic office in Washington.

"The government of Cuba is increasingly obstructing the safe, legal and orderly migration of individuals from Cuba," Albright said.

Disclosure of the diplomat-

ic note, containing U.S. charges of inhumane behavior, follows a protracted and touchy U.S. dispute with Cuban Americans over 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez.

The boy was taken from Cuba by his mother, who died at sea, and taken home by his father after a lengthy legal battle with emigre relatives in Florida.

The Cuban government cited the incident in June when it indefinitely suspended immigration negotiations with the United States.

Unlike Elian and his mother, the 117 Cubans cited in the U.S. complaint had visas to go to the United States but were prevented from leaving Cuba.

In 16 cases, the denial separated families, while in 17 cases, physicians and other professionals were blocked from leaving, said Philip Reeker, a State Department spokesman.

The diplomatic note alleged that Cuba had not abided by a 1994 agreement seeking to establish ground rules for the orderly migration of 20,000 Cubans plus family members to

the United States.

The note was handed to Fernando Remirez, chief of the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington, and also was delivered to the Cuban foreign ministry in Havana. The Cuban mission offered no immediate reaction to the specific accusation.

However, spokesman Roberto Garcia criticized U.S. policy as criminal, immoral and discriminatory, saying the United States was responsible for deaths at sea because it encouraged Cubans to try to reach U.S. shores, knowing they would be warmly received.

"Most people who come here know once they reach American soil they will be granted benefits other immigrants don't get," Garcia said.

The U.S. note said 117 Cubans from 57 families had been denied exit permits by the Cuban government in a recent 75-day period. The United States had granted all of them visas.

A senior State Department official said Coast Guard personnel recently have picked up

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Roberto Garcia
Cuban spokesman

an increasing number of fleeing Cubans who have U.S. travel documents. Established procedures require that Cubans intercepted by the Coast Guard be returned to the island.

The note said the recent death of two fleeing Cuban brothers "highlights the growing propensity of Cubans denied the means to migrate in a safe, orderly and legal fashion to risk their lives in desperate sea voyages."

The brothers were victims of a shark attack in the Florida Straits.

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World War II memorial plans denounced in Washington, D.C.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Plans for a World War II memorial on Washington's National Mall were denounced as a meaningless tribute at a public hearing Monday.

President Clinton has already dedicated the site for the plaza, between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, and preliminary designs have won approval from the Fine Arts Commission and the National Capital Planning Commission.

But Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has the authority to reject

the plans.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is expected to give Babbitt its nonbinding decision this week.

Two dozen citizens joined groups opposed to the memorial and its site at the council's Monday hearing. The longest and most elaborate denunciation of the plans came from Judy Scott Feldman, co-chairwoman of the National Coalition to Save our Mall.

"The proposed World War II Memorial design is meaningless as a tribute to the World War II vet-

erans and national sacrifice, valor and victory," she said.

"Its masonry surfaces, arches and pillars are dehumanizing. The stories of citizen soldiers, ordinary Americans who contributed at every level of society, are absent."

Chairman J. Carter Brown of the Fine Arts Commission told the Council the plaza's design had improved over the past three years.

He emphasized the significance of World War II in history and pointed to the memorials in the capital to Presidents Lincoln, Grant and Civil War generals.

A&M won't see bonfire this season

**The Battalion
Texas A&M University**

COLLEGE STATION, Texas — Texas A&M's 90-year-old tradition has been put on hiatus after the university president said the storied bonfire wouldn't happen until at least 2002.

Texas A&M President Ray M. Bowen this summer said significant changes would be made to the building process, including greater university supervision and a professionally engineered design.

"Bowen received thousands of e-mails and letters with opinions about what should happen to Bonfire," said Malon Southerland, vice president of student affairs. "We tried to respond to most of them."

Since then, three committees have been formed — one to honor those killed and injured in the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, one to plan an event for this year and one to suggest a permanent bonfire structure.

Prior to the release of Bowen's decision, a group of students circled a petition supporting the continuation of bonfire and gathered 10,000 to 12,000 signatures. During the summer, Southerland said some members of the group met with him to discuss their efforts to create an off-campus bonfire. Southerland said he told the group that any off-campus bonfire would not be supported by the university, and students participating may face punishment if they proceed with plans for the off-campus bonfire.

The bonfire planning committee, a committee of the faculty senate, stressed the need to reform the bonfire at an open forum of last spring.

"It was the opinion of the planning committee that bonfire should not occur in 2000 and should not occur in its present form in the future," said Jonathan Smith, chairman of the committee.

Thousands of people attend the bonfire each year. But this year, in place of the bonfire, there will be a yell practice and a memorial for the 12 students who died and the 27 who were injured in the collapse.

An additional committee was appointed in February to create a long-term memorial for the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse.



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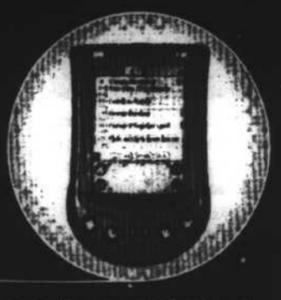


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