

Press Release

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DHS ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO COMBAT ALIEN SMUGGLING OF CUBANS

WASHINGTON – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reaffirmed today its commitment to work closely with Congress to develop legislation that will increase both criminal and civil penalties for maritime alien smugglers. The physical risks inflicted on aliens by repeat-offender smugglers are very significant, but the current law is not well-suited for prosecution of alien smugglers by sea. Modeled on the maritime drug-smuggling laws, the proposed legislation will enhance prosecution against those who repeatedly endanger innocent lives.

DHS also announced today additional measures to discourage Cubans from turning to alien smuggling as a way to enter the United States. These measures will promote the safe, legal, and orderly migration of Cubans with families in the United States and Cuban medical personnel in third countries, while prohibiting entry into the United States to members of the Castro regime who have committed human rights abuses.

“We urge the Cuban people to stay on the island, so that they may work for their freedom and a democratic society. We discourage anyone from risking their life in the open seas in order to travel to the United States,” said Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Michael P. Jackson. “However, I understand many Cubans have been separated from their families for years and long for the day when they can reunite. If a Cuban chooses to reunite with their family in the United States, we support a safe, legal and orderly migration.”

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will undertake the following measures related to U.S. policy with Cuba:

- • USCIS will further strengthen measures that support the reunification of families separated by the Castro regime. Using existing parole authority, USCIS will exercise its discretion to increase the numbers of Cuban migrants and refugees admitted to the United States each year who have family members in the United States. Today, approximately 21,000 total Cuban migrants are admitted into the U.S. annually. While this number will not change, a significantly larger percentage will now be Cubans with family members in the United States.

Importantly, any Cuban who attempts to enter illegally the United States will be deemed ineligible for this beneficial treatment. (*see attached fact sheet*)

- • DHS has committed to implement a system that can allow families to learn if their loved ones have been interdicted at sea. When implemented, a family member can contact their member of Congress who may formally relay this request to USCIS. USCIS can then supply to the member of Congress any available safety and health information regarding that migrant.

U.S. Department of State, in conjunction with USCIS, will undertake the following measures related to U.S. policy with Cuba:

- • Any Cuban regime officials who are identified by the U.S. Department of State or other government agencies as human rights abusers will not be allowed to enter the United States to take advantage of immigration benefits. Aliens known to have been employed in certain positions of authority in the Cuban government or known to have been engaged in persecution of others will also be denied any benefits.
- • Using existing parole authority, the United States will allow Cuban medical personnel currently conscripted to study or work in a third country under the direction of the Cuban government to enter the United States. This policy will also apply to the families of these professionals, who often must remain in Cuba.

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