

MNNN

NOR529 EPB263

0717 : RESCUE:

MIAMI, DEC. 26, REUTER -- AMERICAN COAST GUARDSMEN RESCUED SIX PERSONS AND THEIR PETS FROM A CONVERTED PT BOAT SINKING OFF CUBA, A COAST GUARD SPOKESMAN SAID HERE TODAY.

THE COAST GUARD CONTACTED THE STATE DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY WHICH GAVE PERMISSION FOR THE RESCUE OPERATION ONLY FIVE MILES OFF CUBA, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

A CUBAN BOAT ALSO COOPERATED IN TRYING TO SALVAGE THE 85-FOOT "SEA ROVER," THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

THE SEA ROVER'S OWNER-OPERATOR RADIOED THE COAST GUARD HERE YESTERDAY THAT HIS VESSEL HAD RUN AGROUND AND WAS SINKING OFF THE NORTHWESTERN TIP OF CUBA.

A COAST GUARD AMPHIBIOUS HELICOPTER EVACUATED THREE CHILDREN, TWO WOMEN AND TWO DOGS BUT NIKOLA SEZERGIJA REMAINED BEHIND TO TRY TO SALVAGE HIS BOAT, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THE RESCUED PEOPLE SAID THEY WERE MIAMI RESIDENTS BUT DECLINED TO SAY WHETHER THEY HAD PLANNED TO GO TO CUBA.

THE EVACUATED GROUP WAS FLOWN TO A COAST GUARD AIR STATION AT OPA-LOCKA, FLA., WHERE THEY WERE REPORTED IN GOOD CONDITION.

REUTER (N/V) JF/;