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FLOTILLA LEAD B25 250

MIAMI, FLA. (AP)-U.S. AUTHORITIES TODAY ORDERED THE ORGANIZER OF A PROPOSED EXILE FLOTILLA TO CUBA NOT TO LEAVE AMERICAN SOIL AND THREATENED HIM WITH FIVE YEARS IN PRISON IF HE DISOBEYED.

THE ORGANIZER, RAMON DONESTEVEZ, 43, APPEALED TO WORLD LEADERS TO SUPPORT HIS IDEA OF SENDING A FLEET OF SMALL BOATS TO CUBA IN A BID TO WIN FREEDOM FOR THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

DONESTEVEZ SET FRIDAY AS THE DAY FOR THE FLOTILLA TO SET SAIL BUT U.S. AUTHORITIES SAID THEY HAD SERVED HIM WITH A NOTICE FORBIDDING DEPARTURE.

"WE CAN ARREST HIM IF HE TRIES TO LEAVE," SAID ONE OFFICIAL.

THE ORDER WAS BASED ON AN IMMIGRATION ACT AUTHORIZING THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE TO PREVENT DEPARTURE OF ANY ALIEN IF THE SERVICE FEELS THE DEPARTURE IS PREJUDICIAL TO U.S. INTERESTS.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THE FLOTILLA WAS OPPOSED BECAUSE THE VOYAGE WAS CONSIDERED HAZARDOUS WITHOUT EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES HAS NEGOTIATED THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS FOR THREE YEARS FOR RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS.

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THREE YEARS FOR RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS.

"SUCH A TRIP BY SMALL BOAT IS ALWAYS DANGEROUS AND DOUBLY SO DURING THE HURRICANE SEASON," SAID A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL. "THE COAST GUARD WOULD BE PULLING PEOPLE OUT OF THE WATER."

DONESTEVEZ, A BOAT BUILDER, SENT 86 CABLEGRAMS TO NATIONAL LEADERS ON SIX CONTINENTS LATE TUESDAY ASKING FOR THEIR "MORAL SUPPORT" OF HIS PROJECT.

IN THE CABLEGRAMS, DONESTEVEZ SAID HIS IDEA WAS "TO ASK THE GOVERNMENT OF CUBA FOR GENERAL AMNESTY" FOR THE PRISONERS. "WE ARE GOING ON A MISSION OF PEACE."

HUMANITARIANISM WAS THE ONLY FACTOR AT STAKE, SAID DONESTEVEZ. OTHER EXILES DENOUNCED THE PROJECT AS A "SINISTER COMMUNIST PLOT."

THE FLOTILLA 7TH GRAF

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by LMH

FLOTILLA

MIAMI, Fla. AP - An exile flotilla scheduled to sail for Cuba Friday to seek freedom for political prisoners was called off Wednesday night.

The organizer, Ramon Donestevez, announced the decision after the U.S. government had ordered him not to leave this country, and told him he faced a possible five-year imprisonment if he did.

"As a responsible man I have no other choice," Donestevez said.

But he said he would ask U.S. authorities for a hearing and then reschedule the flotilla, perhaps within two weeks.

Donestevez had said earlier that some 600 relatives of prisoners would make the trip.

The flotilla plan had drawn criticism from 10 exile groups, who said plans to seek release of political prisoners in Cuba should be handled by international organizations.

EJ1010ped Sept 6