

U.S. HOLDS 9 CUBANS RESCUED FROM BOAT

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WASHINGTON, March 14 — Nine Cubans rescued from a sinking Cuban fishing boat are being held in "protective and friendly custody" in Key West, Fla., by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, a State Department spokesman said today.

The boat, the Cayo Largo 96, was found foundering in international waters Monday night by a United States Coast Guard vessel. All nine aboard were described as being in good condition.

A State Department spokesman said, however, that it was understood that two of the men had expressed a desire to remain in the United States. That request, the spokesman said, was being considered by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The crew could present the first test case under the recent hijacking agreement with Cuba that provides for the trial or extradition of hijackers. The State Department spokesman said, however, that it was still unclear whether the fishing boat was hijacked by the two men reportedly seeking asylum in the United States.