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New Cuba 'Freedom Flights'

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Washington

So-called "freedom flights" carrying Cubans to the U.S. will be resumed within the next few weeks, the State Department said last night.

The government of Fidel Castro has cleared the way for 3400 Cubans to emigrate to the U.S. aboard the flights, which were halted in May, spokesman Paul Hare said.

Since the flights originated in December 1965, approximately 250,000 Cubans have left the island for the U.S. but the flights — twice a day, five days a week at one time — began tapering off in August 1971. The Castro government explained the reduction as due to lack of applicants.

The State Department learned through the Swiss government Castro would let

the flights resume. The Swiss Embassy in Havana represents U.S. interests in Cuba in the absence of formal diplomatic relations.

Hare said, in response to a question, that the resumption of the flights—paid for by the U.S. government—has no connection with current negotiations with the Cubans to reach an agreement on airplane hijackings.

Associated Press