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Exile Flotilla 300

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MIAMI, Fla. AP - A group of anti-Castro organizations charged Tuesday that a plan to send an exile flotilla to Cuba to bring back political prisoners is "a sinister communist plot to embarrass the U.S. government." The charge was denied by the flotilla's organizer.

Leaders of 10 exile organizations claimed the plan had the blessings of the Fidel Castro government.

"It's a plot to demoralize the Cuban exiles and embarrass the U.S. government," they claimed in a joint statement. As an alternative, they suggested an international organization—perhaps the Vatican—should seek the prisoners' freedom.

As the statement was issued, exile boats began gathering 75 miles south of Miami, at Marathon in the Florida Keys, for the mass voyage to Camarioca, Cuba.

Ramon Donestevéz, organizer of the proposed expedition, said he expected some 600 relatives of Cuban prisoners to embark on the voyage early Friday morning.

Donestevéz denied "any Communist plan" was involved.

"This purely is a humanitarian movement to get these people out of prison," he said. Donestevéz said he would present a petition of amnesty for the prisoners to Castro, the Cuban prime minister.

U.S. officials estimate between 50,000 and 100,000 political prisoners are in Cuba.

Donestevéz, who said he might end up in a Cuban prison himself, said he notified the Cuban government of the flotilla's pending arrival but received no reply.

"We don't know if Castro will put us into prison or what, but we are going to take the risk," Donestevéz said.

The group protesting the flotilla offered to take the prisoners' case to international organizations. They suggested Pope Paul VI or some democratic government also should join the move for the prisoners' release.

"We will offer a 30-day truce in our war against Castro during any international negotiations with the Cuban government," said Andres Nazario, secretary-general of the Second Front of Escambray and spokesman for the 10 groups.

Six commandos of the Second Front were imprisoned by Castro's regime last month after they were caught in Cuba.

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