

# *Cuba urges to prevent tragic incidents as a consequence of irregular migration.*

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Havana, March 11 (RHC)-- The Cuban Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday, March 11, on a failed human trafficking operation that has resulted in the loss of lives in the Florida Straits. Radio Havana Cuba brings the full text of that declaration.

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On March 2, 2021, there was a departure from the northern coast of Villa Clara province, organized from the United States, using a human trafficking speedboat.

The participants, all Cubans, including women and children, were taken by the traffickers to an inhospitable and uninhabited cay of the salt bank in the Bahamas. This fact was communicated in real-time by the Cuban Border Guard Troops to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Subsequently, on that same cay, they were picked up by a second boat, also from the United States and with a Florida registration plate, to bring them into United States territory.

On March 4, 3 nautical miles off Cayo Sal, Bahamas, the boat capsized, and the people remained in the water for more than 14 hours. The castaways were rescued by a Royal Bahamas Defense Force vessel (12 people alive and one dead body). According to Bahamian authorities' preliminary information, several people are estimated to be missing, including women and two children.

Upon learning of this serious incident, the Cuban Border Guard Troops units designated a boat, with the support of a Revolutionary Air Force aircraft, to carry out a search and rescue operation and found the Florida-registered boat, which had drifted into Cuban territorial waters.

With the improvement of the hydro-meteorological conditions, the Cuban authorities will continue the naval and aerial search with surface units and aircraft in the northern coast of Matanzas and Villa Clara's provinces, with the support of institutions and private vessels.



### **Statement by the Cuban Foreign Ministry**

Cuban authorities have managed to establish that an individual returned to Cuba by the U.S. Coast Guard on March 6 as an alleged migrant is one of the boatmen involved in this human trafficking operation and is subject to a judicial process in Cuba. Investigations continue to achieve the total clarification of this unfortunate event.

As our people know, among the factors that constitute incentives to irregular migration are the suspension of the processing and granting of immigrant and non-immigrant visas at the U.S. Consulate in Havana and the transfer of these procedures to third countries, as well as the validity of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act.

Meanwhile, the United States is not meeting its commitment to guarantee the legal migration from Cuba to that country of a minimum of 20,000 Cubans per year.

The Cuban Government will continue to work to prevent irregular, unsafe, and disorderly migration, prevent risky departures that endanger human life, and combat acts of violence associated with this phenomenon and related crimes, such as human trafficking and illegal smuggling of migrants.

Cuba urges to take all measures to prevent the tragic consequences of irregular emigration, ratifies its commitment to the Joint Declaration signed between Cuba and the United States, on January 12, 2017, on migration, and reaffirms that it rigorously fulfills its obligations under that agreement.

Havana, March 11, 2021

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