

Immigration Service Fights Release of Detained Haitians

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Body

The **Immigration** and Naturalization **Service** has appealed a bail ruling that could grant the **release** of some **detained Haitians**, arguing that it could prompt a mass exodus from Haiti, an agency spokesman said today.

Such a migration would endanger the lives of **Haitians** at sea and tie up Coast Guard resources that should be committed to domestic security and the war on terrorism, the spokesman, Mario Ortiz, said.

"We believe that if this group was to be **released**, it would send a signal back to Haiti saying, 'Hey we got in,' and it would trigger a mass migration that would be a threat to our national security," Mr. Ortiz said.

About 200 **Haitians** waded ashore on Oct. 29 near Key Biscayne, Fla., after their boat ran aground. On Wednesday, an **immigration** judge granted 40 of them bonds as high as \$4,500 on charges that they illegally entered the United States.

More bond hearings were set for Friday and next week.

Immigrants who post bond will be free until their asylum hearings, which have not been scheduled.

The **immigration service** appealed every bond granted on Wednesday and will continue to do so, Mr. Ortiz said. The **Haitians** granted bond will remain in **detention** until the Board of **Immigration** Appeals rules on their status.

Advocates for immigrants said that **releasing** the **Haitians** would not pose a security threat.

Dina Paul Parks, the executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights in New York, said **releasing Haitians** would not fuel a mass migration.

"Folks know that the waters are patrolled," Ms. Parks said. "They know what their chances are. If someone decides to leave Haiti, it's for a desperate reason, and I'm not sure the thought of being **detained** in the U.S. is worse."

The **immigration service** did not appeal the bond given today to three pregnant **Haitians**, an **immigration** advocate, Cheryl Little, said.

Illegal immigrants from other countries who are found on American soil are usually **released** after several days, given more time to prepare for asylum hearings and have better access to lawyers, Ms. Little said.

The **immigration service** changed its policy toward **Haitians** after a large boatload of **Haitians** arrived in December, **detaining** them and expediting their asylum hearings.

Ms. Little said the government was discriminating against **Haitians**.

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Mr. Ortiz said the new policy was a response to growing concern of an extensive migration from Haiti.

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