

## Smuggling Death Toll May Drop

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### **Body**

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The **death toll** in last weekend's Haitian immigrant **smuggling** disaster **may** be far lower than the 40 originally feared to have drowned, U.S. authorities said today.

Dan Geoghegan, assistant chief in the U.S. Border Patrol's Miami Sector headquarters, said survivors of the disaster had changed their stories and reported that one boat, not two, had sunk during a **smuggling** run on Saturday.

Originally, survivors had told the Border Patrol that two boats traveled together from the western Bahamas to Florida, carrying a total of more than 40 people. A **death toll** of 40 would have made this **smuggling** disaster the worst known to have occurred off Florida, U.S. Coast Guard and Customs officials said.

"The good news would be that actually there was only one boat and fewer people died," said Geoghegan.

The Coast Guard rescued three Haitians from the Atlantic Ocean between the Bahamas and Florida on Saturday, and found the bodies of two others.

But officials said it was too early to know for sure whether fewer people had died. Smugglers usually order the immigrants they carry to tell conflicting stories if they are caught, authorities cautioned.

Geoghegan said another interview was scheduled with a survivor who has been hospitalized since the accident. Authorities hope to know more after that discussion.

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