

PHOTOGRAPHER SLIPPED INTO HOUSE, AS "HELL BROKE LOOSE"

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Body

THE **PHOTOGRAPHER**'S VIEW

The scene in Lazaro Gonzalez's bedroom could hardly have been more dramatic: a federal agent wearing green riot gear, a helmet and goggles was carrying an automatic rifle when he confronted a man holding a frightened Elian Gonzalez in a closet.

The moment was captured in a series of photos Saturday by an Associated Press **photographer**. The attorney general was asked about the image at a news conference where she defended the approach to taking custody of Elian.

AP free-lance **photographer** Alan Diaz said Elian was crying and yelled to him, "Que esta pasando?" - What's happening? - moments before a federal agent burst into the bedroom where he was being held.

When the raid began, Diaz was with another **photographer** and an NBC cameraman on the lawn next door to the **house** of Elian's great-uncle. The family had arranged with television networks to have cameras nearby to record any raid.

With the arrival of federal agents, "All of a sudden **hell broke loose**," said Diaz. "All I recall is the NBC guy saying, 'They're here, they're here.' "

Diaz and the cameraman jumped over the chain-link fence in front of the Gonzalez home and walked into the **house**. An associate of the relatives directed Diaz to the room Elian had been sharing with Marisleyxis.

"A family friend grabbed me and he said, 'Go to the room, go to the room,' " Diaz said. But Elian wasn't there. The **photographer** then knocked on the door of Lazaro's bedroom, and his wife, Angela, opened it. Elian was in a closet, held by Donato Dalrymple, one of the fishermen who had rescued him at sea. Dalrymple said that amid the noise and commotion from the agents breaking into the home, he had run to the boy and taken him into his arms, retreating to Lazaro Gonzalez's bedroom.

Diaz recalled that when he arrived in the bedroom, Elian "was crying and he was asking me, 'What's happening?' and all I said was, 'Nothing's wrong.' I mean, what was I going to say?"

Seconds later, federal agents entered the room and seized the boy. Elian continued to cry and ask, "What's happening?"

"They went to the closet and I shot (the photograph of) them grabbing the baby," Diaz said.

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NBC cameraman Tony Zumbado said later he was dragged away from the house by a federal agent.

At a news conference in Washington, Attorney General Janet Reno was asked whether the photograph had raised the question of excessive force.

"One of the beauties of television is that it shows exactly what the facts are," Reno said. "And as I understand it, if you look at it carefully, it shows that the gun was pointed to the side, and that the finger was not on the trigger."

A switch on the HK MP-5 weapon in photographs is clearly on "S" for safety, a position from which it could not be fired.

Graphic

PHOTO Photo from THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - Photographer Alan Diaz outside the home of Lazaro Gonzalez in Miami on Saturday. Diaz told an upset Elian Gonzalez, "Nothing's wrong."

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