

Cuba tells Nicaragua players will stay put

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Body

Cuba denied Saturday that any arrangements had been made with **Nicaragua** to grant visas for three Cuban **players** and a coach who tried to flee the island but were forcibly returned.

The four said Friday they have been promised visas by officials at the Nicaraguan embassy in the Cuban capital. Afterward, coach Orlando Chinae said he was **told** the offer applied to all of the approximately 190 Cubans the Bahamas repatriated in recent weeks.

Cuba's Foreign Ministry said that if Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman is **willing** to accept immigrants, he could have all the Cubans he wanted - but not the repatriated **players**.

Compiled from Wire ReportsBBNEWS.31

"If Mr. Aleman is so generous, we would be **willing** to give authorization for any citizen wishing to emigrate legally to **Nicaragua**," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement published by the official news agency Prensa Latina.

The Bahamas has a treaty with **Cuba** under which it returns illegal immigrants to **Cuba**.

On Thursday, Aleman offered his country as a haven for the repatriated Cubans. Aleman also said the Miami-based, anti-Castro Cuban-American National Foundation had agreed to cover the costs of the transfer.

ASTROS: OF Richard Hidalgo was placed on the 15-day disabled list after separating his right shoulder crashing into the wall Friday night. To fill his spot, OF Ray Montgomery was recalled from Triple-A New Orleans.

BLUE JAYS: Woody Williams has allowed just three earned runs in his past 25 2/3 innings.

BRAVES: The team has lost three in a row for the first time since Colorado swept a series at Turner Field Sept. 12-14.

BREWERS: Doug Jones, the team's 40-year-old closer who has surrendered nine homers and blown seven saves, has lost his job - sort of. He **will** share closing duties with right-hander Bob Wickman and lefty Mike Myers, manager Phil Garner said.

DIAMONDBACKS: CF Devon White was not in the lineup after 54 starts because of a tweaked right hamstring. But the team said he was available to play, if needed.

DODGERS: The team announced that during the Cardinals series starting Tuesday, stadium gates **will** open two hours before the game and parking lots **will** open 2 1/2 before - a half-hour difference in each case - to accommodate the volume of fans expected to arrive early to watch Mark McGwire attack the leftfield pavilion during batting practice.

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GIANTS: CF Darryl Hamilton bruised his left heel when he fouled a ball off his foot and was listed as day-to-day.

ORIOLES: RHP Scott Kamieniecki was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a stiff neck, leaving the team without three members of its starting rotation. He joins Mike Mussina (fractured nose) and Jimmy Key (rotator cuff inflammation) on the DL. To fill the void, the team purchased the contract of Richie Lewis from Triple-A Rochester. Lewis likely will start Monday against Seattle.

RED SOX: SS Nomar Garciaparra did not play. He was activated from the disabled list Thursday after being sidelined by a problem with his right shoulder, and agitated himself going for a grounder Friday. Manager Jimmy Williams said the team would see how he was feeling today.

ROYALS: Former relief ace Dan Quisenberry, who is battling brain cancer, was inducted into the team's Hall of Fame during a pregame ceremony. Quisenberry thanked everyone in a halting voice for giving him "more than I deserve."

WHITE SOX: OF Ruben Sierra was given his outright release after he cleared waivers Friday.

YANKEES: GM Brian Cashman said his "impression is now changing" about the availability of Randy Johnson. Cashman spoke to Seattle GM Woody Woodward late Friday but said the discussion had "no substance to it." The Mariners may want to dump Johnson but are not ready to tank this season. Cashman initially thought Seattle would do something by this weekend. The M's asked for Andy Pettitte and Mariano Rivera during the winter, and they still covet Pettitte.

- TIMES WIRES

Graphic

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, Associated Press; Dodgers starter Hideo Nomo towels off after the second inning.

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