

HAITIANS BOLT SHIP, SWARM CAUSEWAY

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Body

Hundreds of Haitian refugees jumped from a crowded wooden freighter that ran aground near Miami and **swarmed** onto a freeway yesterday.

Some of the 200 or so boat people reported having been at sea for eight days, police said.

Many were dazed and could hardly speak to ask for food and water. Others scrambled onto the highway and tried to hitch rides as police rushed in to round them up.

At least one pickup truck was seen driving off jam-packed with immigrants.

The Coast Guard said the refugees' 50-foot boat was dangerously overcrowded when it ran aground off Key Biscayne.

"They were all over the front of the boat, the top of the boat, the back of the boat. They were all over it," said windsurfer Ovidio DeLeon. "Then they started jumping."

As the boat approached the shore, many jumped overboard and swam. Later, small children were passed to refugees standing in knee-deep water.

Police rounded up dozens, put them in plastic handcuffs and bused them to an Immigration and Naturalization Service jail in Miami-Dade County.

"You saw the desperation written all over these people's faces," said prominent Haitian-American activist Gepsie MetAllus. "And because of immigration policies, I just don't see how we can make the case for them to stay."

Under a Bush administration policy change in December, Haitian immigrants are detained pending hearings, unlike Cuban refugees, who are released and allowed to stay.

Some of the refugees spoke Spanish, so authorities speculated Dominicans were among the refugees.

Graphic

AP NO WAY OUT **Haitians** are held on Rickenbacker **Causeway** near Hobie Beach, Fla., yesterday after their crowded wooden freighter ran aground near Miami.

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