

Cuban Official Criticizes Lag By the U.S. in Issuing Visas

The New York Times

September 22, 1994, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 1994 The New York Times Company

Distribution: Foreign Desk

Section: Section A; ; Section A; Page 8; Column 1; Foreign Desk ; Column 1;

Length: 479 words

Byline: By TIM GOLDEN,

By TIM GOLDEN, Special to The New York Times

Dateline: HAVANA, Sept. 21

Body

A senior **Cuban official** pressed the **United States** today to begin granting **visas** to thousands of Cubans who want to emigrate, saying a new American policy must show results quickly if it is to deter the flight of refugees.

The **official**, Ricardo Alarcon, a former Foreign Minister who was Cuba's chief negotiator in immigration talks with the **United States** this month, cautioned that he did not feel that Washington was deliberately delaying enforcement of an agreement reached Sept. 9 in New York.

But he said that while Cuba had upheld its part of the deal by taking measures to end the exodus of people from the island on makeshift rafts and boats, the pressure could not be contained indefinitely if Cubans wishing to leave were not offered a legal way to do so.

"This is dangerous, not because of how the **Cuban** authorities perceive it, but because of how the people are perceiving it," Mr. Alarcon, the president of the National Assembly, said in an interview. "The thing that is going to discourage people from leaving illegally is to give them a real chance to emigrate legally. And until now, I have not heard of one single **visa** that has been granted."

Under the terms of the accord, the **United States** is to **issue** at least 20,000 immigrant **visas** a year, in addition to those granted to Cubans who apply to join relatives who are American citizens. This year, the Administration is also to admit Cubans from a waiting list of more than 19,000 qualified applicants.

American **officials** have said they cannot begin to process the **visas** until the Immigration and Naturalization Service sets the criteria and more consular officers are sent to Havana.

In a telephone interview from Washington, a Justice Department **official** said today that the development of entrance criteria was "in the final stages" and that an announcement would be made soon.

Mr. Alarcon, however, said it was unacceptable that at least some **visas** had not been **issued**. "They have thousands of people who are ready to travel now," he said, referring to those on the waiting list. "All they need is a stamp on their passports."

Cuban officials hope to extend their talks with Washington to include **issues** like the 32-year economic embargo.

Cuban Official Criticizes Lag By the U.S. in Issuing Visas

The two sides are to meet again by Oct. 24 to review the immigration issue. Some Cuban officials have indicated that they are likely then to formally challenge new sanctions imposed by President Clinton on Aug. 20 that restrict travel and the sending of money to Cuba.

Weekly flights from Miami to Havana have already dropped to two from about a dozen, and remittances estimated at more than \$200 million each year have been cut back.

Cuban and American officials are also expected to begin grappling with the problem of what to do with thousands of refugees interned at American military bases in Panama and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); IMMIGRATION (90%); EMIGRATION (90%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); INTERVIEWS (78%); AGREEMENTS (78%); REFUGEES (78%); US PRESIDENTS (78%); FOREIGN RELATIONS (77%); EMBARGOES & SANCTIONS (76%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (76%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (73%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (73%); INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (72%); STATE DEPARTMENTS & FOREIGN SERVICES (72%)

Person: BILL CLINTON (56%)

Geographic: HAVANA, CUBA (88%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); CUBA (99%); UNITED STATES (99%)

Load-Date: September 22, 1994

End of Document