

# **CUBA LAUDS U.S. RETURN OF BALLPLAYER BUT BLASTS POLICIES IN GENERAL**

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## **Body**

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Cuba praised the U.S. decision to refuse asylum to Cuban baseball star Andy Morales, but yesterday assailed U.S. policies that Havana says encourage people such as Morales and Elian Gonzalez's mother to migrate illegally to the United States. The state-run media renewed its attacks on the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, saying it lures Cubans hoping to live in the United States to risk deadly boat trips across the ocean toward U.S. soil.

The government said that 150,000 children would march outside the U.S. Interests Section today to protest American immigration policies and continued delays in Elian's return to his communist homeland.

Morales, who along with 30 other Cubans was picked up by the Coast Guard off Key West on May 31, was repatriated Wednesday after U.S. immigration officials determined the 25-year-old third baseman did not qualify for political asylum.

Participants in a seminar on U.S. immigration policies aired on Cuban state television called the American decision "correct," the Communist Party daily Granma reported.

But the seminar and the newspaper blasted the Cuban Adjustment Act, which allows Cubans who reach American soil to stay and apply for permanent U.S. residency.

"The true cause of the tragedy of Elian Gonzalez, whose kidnapping has moved the American public, is the Cuban Adjustment Act," Granma said in a front-page story on immigration policies.

One in every five Cubans who set off for the United States illegally by sea dies in the attempt, seminar participants said. They also estimated that 85 percent of boat trips to the United States were conducted by illegal immigrant smugglers.

After Morales' boat was picked up, two suspected smugglers were turned over to the U.S. Border Patrol.

Branding the act "arbitrary, killer law," Granma said that of the 399 Cuban migrants the U.S. Coast Guard has picked up at sea during the first five months of this year, 290 were repatriated. An additional 612 Cubans reached land and were covered by the adjustment law.

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Morales hit a home run last year in a 12-6 victory by the Cuban national team over the Baltimore Orioles in Baltimore.

In Miami, Emilio Vazquez of the Cuban-American National Foundation - a top exile group opposed to Cuban President Fidel Castro - said he was disappointed by Morales' repatriation.

"Mr. Morales, being a well-known ballplayer, might be made to be an example to instill fear in the Cuban people that anyone who tried to defect or has an opinion different from the Cuban government will be subjected to human-rights violations," he said.

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