

4 Haitians With HIV Admitted to U.S.; **Entry of Refugees for Medical Care Said to Be No Change in Policy**

The Washington Post

September 4, 1992, Friday, Capital Edition

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Section: FIRST SECTION; PAGE A8; FOREIGN NEWS, NATIONAL NEWS

Length: 449 words

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Series: Occasional

Body

The Justice Department's decision to admit four HIV-positive Haitian refugees into the United States for medical care does not mean a change in the government's ban on immigrants with the AIDS virus, a department official said yesterday.

But the action does signal that the care the Haitians are receiving at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, may not be comprehensive enough to handle their special needs, the official said.

A man with an eye infection was granted a "humanitarian parole" 10 days ago to receive medical treatment at Bethesda Naval Medical Center. He is being held at the Immigration and Naturalization Service detention center in New York.

INS officials this week granted the same status to a mother and her infant son, who is being treated for double pneumonia at a hospital in Norfolk.

Justice Department officials were prepared to grant parole last week to a woman who was about to give birth, but after military doctors at Guantanamo Bay determined that the birth was less risky than they first thought, she remained there, the Justice Department official said. The mother and child are doing fine, said INS spokesman Duke Austin.

The departures lower to 231 the number of HIV-positive Haitians who remain at Guantanamo Bay with about 59 relatives. Public health officials said last month that at least 23 had developed actual or suspected AIDS symptoms. All of the Haitians were granted initial clearance to pursue their asylum claims in the United States but were prevented from coming here because of a law that bars the entry of immigrants with certain communicable diseases. They were among 37,000 Haitians who fled the nation after a coup last year.

Because the medical conditions of some within the refugee population could deteriorate, it is possible that other Haitians may need to be flown to the United States for treatment, Austin said.

The Justice Department official, who asked not to be identified, said the medical care being provided at Guantanamo "is fine, but we are not going to take the position that the medical care down there can handle every possible thing that comes up. . . . We've reacted in the responsible and humane way."

The Haitians at Guantanamo are caught in a legal limbo because of a court battle over the processing of their asylum claims. Lawyers who have sued the government argue that the Haitians should be allowed legal counsel to pursue their asylum claims. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals this spring ordered the government to allow

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lawyers to interview the Haitians. The government unsuccessfully appealed that ruling and has until late October to ask the Supreme Court to rule on the issue.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (90%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (90%); INFECTIOUS DISEASE (90%); REFUGEES (90%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (90%); AIDS & HIV (90%); APPEALS (89%); PAROLE (89%); DISEASES & DISORDERS (89%); LAWYERS (89%); POLITICAL ASYLUM (89%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); PUBLIC HEALTH (78%); APPELLATE DECISIONS (78%); SUPREME COURTS (78%); MEDICAL TREATMENTS & PROCEDURES (78%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (78%); COUPS (77%); NAVIES (76%); US NAVY (76%); PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH (74%); INFANTS & TODDLERS (74%); IMMIGRANT DETENTION CENTERS (73%); PNEUMONIA (72%); VIRUSES (72%); RESPIRATORY DISEASE (72%); EYE DISORDERS & INJURIES (70%); PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (66%); SUITS & CLAIMS (66%); APPEALS COURTS (64%)

Company: JUSTICE DEPARTMENT; GUANTANAMO BAY; IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); GUANTANAMO BAY; IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%)

Organization: US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENT; GUANTANAMO BAY; IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); GUANTANAMO BAY; IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%); US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (94%)

Industry: LAWYERS (89%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (78%); NAVIES (76%); MILITARY HOSPITALS (76%); US NAVY (76%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (97%); HAITI (95%); CUBA (90%)