

7 Bodies of Asian Immigrants Unidentified After 3 Weeks

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Body

Nearly three **weeks after** a ship crammed with Chinese **immigrants** ran aground off Queens, **7** of the 10 **bodies** of those who perished trying to swim ashore are still **unidentified**.

Community organizations, trying to help families concerned that a relative may be among the victims, complain that the Immigration and Naturalization Service has been unwilling to release photographs or other vital information needed to identify the **bodies** and bury them properly.

As a result, the **bodies** have fallen into a kind of bureaucratic limbo between the Federal immigration agency, the City Medical Examiner's Office, the New York Police Department and the Consulate of the People's Republic of China. Inquiries to each organization have been directed to another.

"I don't understand this at all," said William P. Chiu, chairman of the American Fujian Association of Commerce and Industry. "We have tried to find out from the police and the I.N.S., and everyone tells us to go somewhere else."

I.N.S. Says It Is Trying

A spokeswoman for the I.N.S., Rosemary LaGuardia, said that the Federal agency was "aggressively attempting to assist the Medical Examiner's office in identifying the remaining **bodies**."

"We are showing photo spreads to the detainees and attempting to check fingerprint records," Ms. LaGuardia said.

The men, believed to be from Fujian Province in southeastern China, were killed when the Golden Venture, a tramp steamer carrying nearly 300 Chinese **immigrants**, ran aground off Rockaway Peninsula before dawn on June 6.

Mr. Chiu, who helped organize a Buddhist ceremony on Tuesday for the dead on the beach at Riis Park, said leaders in Chinatown had volunteered to pay for funerals and to send the **bodies** back to China once they are identified.

Possible Fear by Families

Stanley Mark, program director of the **Asian** American Legal Defense and Education Fund, said he had received inquiries from relatives, but that I.N.S. officials told him they were not prepared to release any information about the identities of the dead.

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A lawyer who represents Chinese immigrants said that at least one relative was contacted recently by a man seeking payment for the passenger's voyage, even though it ended in death. The lawyer, who insisted on anonymity, raised the possibility that some families of the dead may be afraid to claim the body of a relative.

The Medical Examiner's office identified three of the dead as Jiang Kun Lin, Ki Hop Ng and Lin Wing Ding. The bodies of Mr. Lin and Mr. Ng were released to relatives and taken to the Ng Fook funeral home on Mulberry Street, said Ellen Borakove, the spokeswoman for the Medical Examiner. Mr. Ding's body and the seven unidentified bodies remain at the Medical Examiner's office in Manhattan.

She added that because four of the bodies washed ashore more than a week after the shipwreck, they were badly decomposed and might be hard to identify without dental records.

Chinese officials insist that they cannot be sure any of the bodies belong to citizens of the People's Republic until they receive documentation.

"We have seen no photographs, and received no records," said Lin Huisheng, a spokesman for the Chinese Consulate. Although the issue has been discussed between Chinese and I.N.S. officials, he said, it is unclear whether the bodies will be returned to China or buried in the United States.

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