

22 CHINESE ALIENS STRANDED IN JERSEY

Daily News (New York)

June 01, 1998, Monday

Copyright 1998 Daily News, L.P.

Section: News; Pg. 5

Length: 439 words

Byline: By KEVIN McCOY, MICHELE McPHEE and JOHN MARZULLI With K.C. Baker

Body

Twenty-two undocumented immigrants from China were dumped on the beach of an upscale New Jersey shore town after their boat ran aground eerily recalling the Golden Venture smuggling incident, authorities said yesterday.

Law enforcement officials said the accidental landing in Bay Head was part of a larger operation in which human cargo is smuggled into New York a wide-ranging scheme under investigation by federal officials.

"This particular boat was expected to come into the New York area about now," said one federal official. "The fog and weather [Saturday night] may have contributed to where the boat ended up."

Investigators yesterday were trying to piece together where the 22 passengers packed on the 28-foot powerboat named the Oops II boarded the vessel.

It was unclear whether the white-and-black boat picked up its load of human cargo from a mother ship farther offshore or from a pickup point outside the U.S.

"A reasonable individual would assume that crossing an ocean with 22 people in a 28-foot boat is fairly improbable," said Immigration and Naturalization Service spokesman Mike Gilhooly.

The would-be immigrants, who paid \$ 40,000 each to so-called snakeheads to be smuggled into the U.S., showed no signs of illness or injury. Still, they "appeared tired, hungry, thirsty and obviously dazed and scared," said Russ Bergeron, another INS spokesman.

State police detectives, meanwhile, were hunting for a 38-year-old Korean man believed to be the owner and operator of the Oops II, officials said. The boat is registered at the Wright Island Marina in New Rochelle, N.Y.

The bizarre sight of soaking-wet immigrants stumbling into the Atlantic surf with only the clothes on their backs late Saturday night came nearly five years to the day that the Golden Venture freighter ran aground off Queens on June 6, 1993, carrying 298 undocumented immigrants from China. Ten would-be immigrants drowned in the Rockaways tragedy.

About 10:30 p.m. Saturday, Bay Head cops spotted the beached boat and began rounding up the immigrants, who were wandering through the backyards of million-dollar waterfront homes.

Authorities believe everyone aboard the Oops II is accounted for except its owner, who was not identified. The U.S. Coast Guard searched the Bay Head shore about 50 miles south of New York as a precaution.

The passengers all adult men in their 20s, except for one 17-year-old were taken to a detention facility in Elizabeth, N.J. They were charged with illegally entering the country.

22 CHINESE ALIENS STRANDED IN JERSEY

It was not immediately known from what part of China the passengers came.

Graphic

AP POWERBOAT used to smuggle **22** illegal **aliens** from China sits in water after running aground at Bay Head, N.J., Saturday night.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (91%); CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS (90%); SMUGGLING (90%); INVESTIGATIONS (90%); **ALIEN** SMUGGLING (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (89%); MARINE TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); BEACHES (78%); POLICE FORCES (77%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (77%); FEDERAL INVESTIGATIONS (76%); ADULTS (72%); WOUNDS & INJURIES (72%)

Company: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (73%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (55%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (73%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (55%)

Industry: MARINE TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS (89%); MARINE VESSELS (78%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (93%); NEW **JERSEY**, USA (92%); CHINA (93%); UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: June 3, 1998