

Jus

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION SERVICES
TEL: 949-8092 FAX: 949-5936**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: MARCH 29, 1995

CONTACT: March 27, 1995 12:20 PM

PERSONS SHELTERING CUBANS OFFERED IMMUNITY

The Immigration Department has renewed its offer of immunity from prosecution for the voluntary return of Cuban migrants to Tent City, and has set a deadline of Thursday (30 March) for compliance. This offer applies to persons who may be providing shelter as well as to the Cubans themselves.

"We are aware that many persons may be assisting Cubans outside of Tent City out of a sense of sympathy and compassion, but they are at the same time leaving themselves open to prosecution," said Acting Chief Immigration Officer Orrett Connor. "Cubans who remain at large are also losing out on opportunities to resolve their situation, and in the long run may face even greater difficulties."

To take advantage of the offer, immediate action must be taken to transport the Cubans to Tent City and to turn them over to the immigration officer on duty.

Otherwise, persons unlawfully sheltering Cubans face the risk of arrest by Immigration or Police Officers. On conviction they are liable to a fine of up to \$2,000 or to imprisonment for a term of up to six months, or both.

A head count undertaken at Tent City last week revealed about 334 persons, a discrepancy of 46 compared with computer records.

The Immigration Department has had reports, Mr. Connor said, indicating that some of these persons are at large in the community.

"If immediate positive action is not taken, the police and the Immigration Department's enforcement officers will shortly be initiating an intensive operation to follow up this information to ensure that all such persons are returned to Tent City," Mr. Connor said. "At that time, the department will be pursuing prosecution of persons found sheltering Cubans illegally outside of Tent City."

Mr. Connor has appealed for anyone who knows of Cuban migrants who are being illegally sheltered outside of Tent City to report this to the Immigration authorities, by calling himself or Mr. Franz Manderson, at 949-8344. All reports will be kept in strictest confidence.

Since the head count, the total at Tent City has dropped to 257, there having been some further departures. It is expected, also, that there will be another transfer to the US safe haven at Guantanamo Bay this week. So far, 80 persons have signed up for this transfer, but figures do tend to fluctuate up to the final hours before each departure.

(GIS)