

Article from the *Cayman Net News*, George Town, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands (U.K.)

Jailed Cubans await arrangements for repatriation

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Two groups of Cuban nationals that landed here recently in East End and Cayman Brac are now awaiting the Cayman Islands Government's decision of their future.

Jeannie Lewis, the Assistant Chief Immigration Officer in the Enforcement Division reported, "There remain twenty-three Cubans in Northward Prison and a mother and two children in a private setting." She continued saying that they would be held in those locations until her department received word from the Chief Secretary's Office (Portfolio of Internal & External Affairs).

Following the suggestion of the Chief Secretary's Office, Cayman Net News contacted Patricia Ebanks at Government Information Services (GIS). "The Cayman Islands Government official policy is repatriation," said Ms Ebanks, "This agreement was reached with Cuban officials through a Memo of Understanding."

"It takes some time to arrange for the repatriation," Ms Ebanks said, "Generally, we are looking at a two-week period for the arrangements to be put in place."

When asked if any international maritime law overrode the Memo of Understanding between Cuba and the Cayman Islands, as several citizens in the East End and in Cayman Brac contend, Ms Ebanks responded, "We've had a long history of Cubans coming here. Many times we have received enormous trouble from people in the media opposed to our giving assistance to these Cubans to help them continue on their journeys due to safety reasons.

"If we assist them so that they can continue their journeys, often times responsibility is attributed to us for aiding them in that way," she said.

As a result, when the arrangements are finalized between the governments of Cuba and the Cayman Islands, the group of twenty-five will be flown back to Cuba.