

Protests pressure U.S. to return Cuban boy

HAVANA (AP) — Fidel Castro's government stepped up pressure on the United States yesterday, appealing for international support and organizing street protests in its battle to have a boy who was rescued off the Florida coast returned to his father in Cuba.

About 1,000 grandmothers marched yesterday through the streets of Elian Gonzalez's hometown of Cardenas, a two-hour drive east of Havana.

"We want Elian back home!" a huge mural painted on a wall by passers-by signed said.

Elian's classmates planned a 6th birthday party for him at their elementary school in Cardenas as Cubans on both sides of the Florida Strait increasingly embraced him as their own political poster child.

President Castro over the weekend demanded the United States return Elian to his father by tonight, and warned the Cuban people were losing patience.

Workers set up bleachers outside the U.S. Interests Section yesterday, apparently preparing for another

protest outside the American mission. Waving Cuban flags and chanting political slogans, 500 members of the Communist Youth held the first protest there Sunday night.

In Washington, White House spokesperson Joe Lockhart called on Cuban officials to guarantee the safety of Americans on the island.

"Elian's father and his grandparents' right to demand his immediate return ... is not negotiable."

— Ricardo Alarcon
National Assembly President

"We take the safety of American personnel very seriously and take quite a dim view of any threat," Lockhart said. "We expect the Cubans to ... deal in a re-

sponsible way with American citizens there."

National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon appealed in a letter to governments throughout the world for their support in bringing Elian home.

"Once again, the United States government has violated the basic principles of law and respect for human dignity thus insulting the child's father, a modest Cuban worker, and his grandparents," Alarcon wrote. "Elian's father and his grandparents' right to demand his immediate return to the home and family from which he was illegally snatched is not negotiable."

Castro accused the U.S. government of kidnapping Elian, who was found Nov. 25 clinging to an inner tube off the coast of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Elian's mother and stepfather were among those who died when an overloaded powerboat sank Thanksgiving week during the 90-mile crossing to Florida in what American authorities said was a case of illegal alien smuggling.

Albright travels to Middle East

Secretary of State warns of further settlement disagreements

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The Clinton administration criticized Israel's expansion of settlements and Palestinian threats to side-track peace talks yesterday as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright began a five-day trip to the Middle East to push an overall agreement between the two sides.

Her first stop was Riyadh to meet with Saudi officials. Albright hoped to get their approval for continued U.S. peacemaking.

Albright's spokesperson, James Rubin, said she was "pretty concerned and troubled" by arguments over the composition of the next Israeli pullback on the West Bank and by Palestinian statements that agreement cannot be

reached unless Israel stops expanding its West Bank settlements.

Rubin said the continuing expansion under Prime Minister Ehud Barak is "a complicating factor" that could harm the atmosphere for negotiations by tending to prejudice the outcome of the talks.

To Palestinian leaders, Rubin said: "We do not think the Palestinian side should impose preconditions on specific issues."

En route from Washington, Albright received two telephone reports from Dennis Ross, the veteran American mediator who failed to break the deadlock in meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Sent to the region by President Clinton to try to narrow differences before a mid-February deadline for the outline of an overall accord, Albright had hoped to focus on the half-dozen thorny issues on the table.



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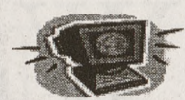
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1.08	I	VS2	\$3750 ⁰⁰	.79	K	S11	\$1850 ⁰⁰
1.03	H	I1	\$1995 ⁰⁰				
.89	F	S12	\$3100 ⁰⁰				
.76	G	S12	\$2700 ⁰⁰				
.70	H	S12	\$1850 ⁰⁰				
.57	I	S12	\$1175 ⁰⁰				
.52	E	VS2	\$1250 ⁰⁰				
.50	G	VS1	\$1450 ⁰⁰	Carat	Color	Clarity	Price
.33	H	VVS2	\$790 ⁰⁰	.66	K	VVS2	\$1439 ⁰⁰
.31	H	VVS2	\$790 ⁰⁰	.54	H	S12	\$1050 ⁰⁰
.26	G	S11	\$275 ⁰⁰	.32	H	S11	\$ 550 ⁰⁰

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1.21	K	S12	\$3950 ⁰⁰	.73	F	S11 / VS2	\$2875 ⁰⁰
.94	K	S11	\$3150 ⁰⁰	.72	E	VS2	\$3700 ⁰⁰ EGL.CERT
.70	G	S11	\$2650 ⁰⁰	.27	G	S12	\$275 ⁰⁰
.49	F	S11	\$1736 ⁰⁰				

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