

Miami mayor: City will not help officials remove Gonzalez from U.S.

MIAMI (AP) — Hours before a crucial meeting between immigration officials and Elian Gonzalez's relatives, the mayor said Wednesday the city would not offer any help to federal officials removing the child from his home.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas said he and the mayors of 22 nearby towns would hold Attorney General Janet Reno and President Clinton directly responsible for any violence that might occur if immigration officials revoked permission for the boy to stay in this country.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has insisted that Elian's Miami relatives agree at a meeting late Wednesday to hand the boy over if they lose their court case. The agency also has said it would not do anything that would traumatize the boy.

"We will not lend our respective resources, whether they be in the form of police officers or any other resources, to assist the federal government in any way, shape or form to inappropriately repatriate Elian Gonzalez to Cuba," said Penelas, who is of Cuban descent.

"If their continued provocation, in the form of unjustified threats to revoke the boy's parole, leads to civil unrest and vio-

lence, we are holding the federal government responsible, and specifically Janet Reno and the president of the United States, for anything that may occur in this community."

Before this afternoon's showdown at INS headquarters here, Elian's paternal great-uncle Lazaro Gonzalez met with his attorneys.

As he has said previously, the uncle said Tuesday he would be willing to release the 6-year-old boy to his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, if the father came from Cuba to pick him up. But Lazaro Gonzalez said he would not deliver the boy to the INS.

"The boy lives in my house and they'll have to go find him there," he told Spanish-language network Telemundo.

Federal officials have said they would revoke the boy's temporary per-

mission to stay in the United States at 9 a.m. Thursday if Lazaro Gonzalez didn't sign the pledge to hand him over. The INS would then direct the relatives to relinquish custody, according to government officials, speaking on condition of anonymity. They would not say exactly what timetable Lazaro Gonzalez would be given.

About 50 demonstrators gathered today outside the Little Havana home where Elian has been staying since he was rescued in November from the ocean after his boat sank during a voyage from Cuba.

His mother, who was divorced from his father, was among 11 people killed.

ABC aired footage today of the boy saying he didn't want to be sent to Cuba.

Elián said in Spanish he didn't want his father to visit him in Miami "because

he'll take me to Cuba and I don't want to go to Cuba," according to the English narration by ABC's Diane Sawyer on "Good Morning America."

"He can stay here, I don't want to go," Sawyer quoted him as saying.

She said the boy also gave conflicting responses to some questions, saying there was nothing he liked about Cuba or Miami.

Reading from a statement after Lazaro Gonzalez balked at the signing the agreement Tuesday, INS spokesperson Karen Kraushaar said the Justice Department hoped the boy's great-uncle signed it soon.

"While INS has always had the authority to implement its decision, we have gone to great lengths to bring about a resolution that is carried out in a manner that creates as little disruption for Elian as possible," Kraushaar said.

The U.S. relatives have asked a federal appeals court in Atlanta to overturn a federal judge's ruling affirming an INS decision to return Elian to his father in Cuba. The court scheduled arguments for the week of May 8, which could complicate any steps by the government in the meantime.

"The boy lives in my house and they'll have to go find him there."

— Lazaro Gonzalez
Elián's paternal great-uncle

Mobile-home fire kills 8 including 5 children

ACWORTH, Ga. (AP) — Fire destroyed a mobile home early Wednesday and killed eight people, including an infant, authorities said.

Firefighters found eight bodies in the four-bedroom, doublewide trailer after getting the fire under control, Cobb County Fire Department spokesperson Mark Gresham said.

The victims were Linda Joanne Cochran, her four children, her niece, her teen-age son's girlfriend and the girlfriend's baby, said Ed Converse, who owns the mobile home park.

He said she worked for him as maintenance supervisor until two weeks ago, when she quit to manage a fast-food restaurant.

"Everybody liked Joanne. She was close to her kids. If there was a stray, she took them in — anyone, anything. She had a huge heart," he said.

The names of the other victims were not immediately available.

Police said the fire at the Modern Living Mobile Home Park in Acworth, about 30 miles northwest of Atlanta, was reported at 3:16 a.m.



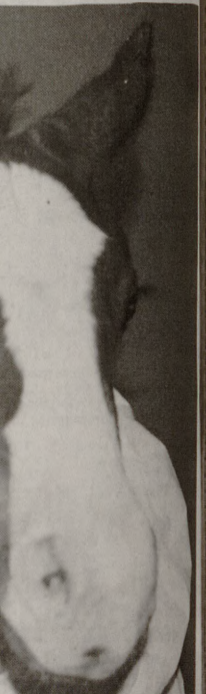
AP

Gresham said the trailer was completely engulfed in flames when crews arrived but it took "just a matter of minutes" to get the fire under control.

The cause was not immediately determined, he said.

Neighbor Tina Knickerbocker said she and her husband slept through the commotion.

"Things around here burn up quick without anybody realizing what's going on," Knickerbocker said.



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Veterinary Medicine Animal ICU unit.

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