Extent

20 folders, 1002 pages

Summary

This collection consists of records related to Operation Safe Haven which was a mission carried out by the United States Government. Operation Safe Haven created camps established in Panama to temporarily house the refugees fleeing from Cuba and Haiti in 1994-1995. The majority of the records contain National Security Council email, cables and records from the Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs Office. See also, collection "Operation Able Manner," FOIA 2011-1040-F.

Scope and Content Note

The materials in FOIA 2011-1045-F are a selective body of documents responsive to the topic of the FOIA. Researchers should consult the archivist about related materials. The records responsive to this FOIA request consist of materials regarding Operation Safe Haven. In the early 1990s, social, economic, and political problems in both Haiti and Cuba let to large seaborne migrations from those countries. The Haitian and Cuban refugees often traveled by sea in unreliable vessels and required United States Coast Guard (USCG) rescue. Between 1993 and 1994, during Operation Able Manner, USCG intercepted over 60,000 Haitian migrants and brought many of them to the United States naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for shelter and further processing. Then, in response to anti-government demonstrations, Cuban President Fidel Castro ordered his military not to interfere with those trying to leave the country. A mass migration attempt, known as the Balseros, ensued. USCG and US Navy ship rescued the Cuban migrants and also brought them to Guantanamo as a part of Operation Sea Signal. At the naval base, the United States military constructed separate tent camps for Haitian and Cuban refugees. There also specific camps for single individuals, intact families, and unaccompanied minors. While conditions in the camps were at times difficult, the United Nations and non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) were allowed to observe and assist in operations. By September 1994, Guantanamo was overcrowded. In response, the United States Joint Task Force initiated Operation Safe Haven. Between September 8, 1994 and March 15, 1995, more than 8,000 Cubans were transported to camps established in Panama as the result of an agreement with the United States government. The uncertainty felt among these migrants led to rioting in the camps on December 7 and 8, which U.S. military personnel quickly brought under control. In the meantime, following the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in October 1994, the Haitians at Guantanamo Bay were repatriated to their country, unless they could prove a legitimate fear of persecution. Unaccompanied minors were either reunited with their families or entered foster care in the United States. After the majority of the Haitians left the naval base, the Cubans in the Panama camps were returned to Guantanamo. In order to resolve the status of the more than 30,000 Cuban migrants in the naval base, the United States government negotiated the Cuban Migration Agreement. Most of the migrants were allowed to enter the United States through humanitarian parole, while future seaborne interceptions of Cuban migrants would result in repatriation unless they claim fear of persecution. This lead to the policy now commonly known as “wet foot, dry foot.” While returned to Cuba if intercepted at sea, migrants who reach the shores of the United States are allowed to remain. In the WHORM Subject Files responsive documents consist of correspondence between the President and members of Congress and NGOs. These records concern the migration of Haitians. In the White House Staff and Office files, responsive documents are located in the files of National Security Council staff member Eric Schwartz. These materials primarily address the fate of the Haitians located in the Guantanamo Bay camps, particularly the plight of the unaccompanied minors. The records include press guidance, clippings, memoranda, and correspondence from both NGOs interested in the migrant situation and from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Schwartz’ papers also discuss the overcrowding dilemma and include numerous agreements with foreign governments for the potential establishment of safe haven camps in their countries. The NSC Cables, Emails, and Records Management System also contains material processed in response to this FOIA request. Both the cables and the emails contain reports from foreign media regarding the transport and behavior of the Cubans living in the safe haven camps in Panama.

Record Type

Textual

System of Arrangement

Records that are responsive to this FOIA request were found in these collection areas – Clinton Presidential Records: WHORM Subject Files, Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files, Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cable, Email, and Records Management System. The White House Office of Records Management (WHORM) contains a variety of series created to organize and track documents and correspondence. The WHORM Subject file was compiled by the White House Office of Records Management and is a series of categories designated by a letter/number combination. Staff and Office files were maintained at the folder level by staff members within their individual offices and document all levels of administration activity. WHORM files are processed at the document level; whereas, Staff and Office files are processed at the folder level, that is, individual documents are not selected and removed from a folder for processing. While this method maintains folder integrity, it frequently results in the incidental processing of documents that are not wholly responsive to the subject area. Staff and Office files were maintained at the folder level by staff members within their individual offices and document all levels of administration activity.

Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Access to Clinton Presidential Records is governed by the Presidential Records Act (PRA) (44 USC 2201) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 USC 552, as amended) and therefore records may be restricted in whole or in part in accordance with legal exemptions

Copyright

Documents in this collection that were prepared by officials of the United States government as part of their official duties are in the public domain. Researchers are advised to consult the copyright law of the United States (17 USC, 101) which governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Provenance

Official records of William Jefferson Clinton’s presidency are housed at the Clinton Presidential Library and are administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the provisions of the Presidential Records Act (PRA).

Subject Headings

Haiti
Haitians
Refugee camps
Cuba--Guantánamo Bay Naval Base
Emigration and immigration
Cuba
Cubans
Detention of persons
Refugees

Processed by

Staff Archivist, May 2012. Previously restricted materials are added as they are released.

Container List

View all digitized files in the National Archives Catalog (NAC)

The following is a list of documents and folders processed in response to FOIA 2011-1045-F:

Box 1

Clinton Presidential Records: WHORM: Subject File

Category Case Number

CO072 056417

CO072 058157

CO072 060556

CO072 062710

CO072 070693

CO072 070697

CO072 072160

CO072 071380SS

CO072 071442

CO072 072093

CO072 072627

Clinton Presidential Records: White House Staff and Office Files

National Security Council

Multilateral & Humanitarian Affairs

Schwartz, Eric

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [1] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [2] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [3] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [4] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [5] [OA/ID 3416]

Box 2

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [6] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [7] [OA/ID 3416]

Haiti-Safe Haven, 1994-1995 [8] [OA/ID 3416]

NSC Cable, Email, and Records Management Systems

NSC Cables

Jan 1993 – Dec 1994

[Operation Safe Haven]

[07/11/1994 – 12/31/1994] [OA/ID 505000]

Jan 1995 – Dec 1996
[Operation Safe Haven]
[12/31/1994 – 02/06/1995] [OA/ID 510000]
NSC Emails
MSMail – Non-Record (Sept 94 – Sept 97)
[Operation Safe Haven]
[01/23/1995] [OA/ID 605000]

Content Available Online