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Belize Joins Central American Countries Denying Cuban Migrants

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Belize is the latest country to deny Cuban migrants entry to their country, rejecting a plan to airlift the migrants to their country so they could continue their journey north into Mexico and to the United States.

The Costa Rican foreign ministry made the announcement late Tuesday, saying they were “deeply disillusioned with Belize’s decision.”

“Without doubt, this greatly complicates the situation,” said Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez said in a statement.

Government officials have been trying to find a solution to the thousands of Cubans stranded in Costa Rica, after Nicaragua closed its borders last month to the influx of migrants trying to travel north to the United States.

The latest proposal was to send the Cubans on private flights to Belize from where they could continue to travel north through Mexico.

However, Belize has refused to accept the migrants, particularly because Mexico would not confirm that it would let the migrants through, saying its entry laws also forbid it from allowing the Cubans to enter.

Last week Guatemala also said it would not allow the Cuban migrants passage through the country, also because Mexico would not guarantee that it would allow the Cubans to enter.

The Costa Rican Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that the number of Cubans currently stranded in the country has increased to 6,000.

“Every day there are more people and more anxiety. The desire is to give a solution to them, but we have not yet. This has to be solved and Costa Rica is not the only one who can do it,” said Gonzalez putting pressure on other countries in the region to cooperate.

“Wet-Foot, Dry-Foot”

Cubans have long been traveling through Central America in order to reach the United States, and often beginning their journey in Ecuador, which allows them to enter without a visa. Once in the South American nation, they make the journey north by land, usually with the help of human traffickers, in order to reach the U.S.

Cuban officials say U.S. migration policy towards Cubans are to blame for the current impasse. This includes what's known as the “wet-foot, dry-foot” policy of 1966, which they say drives “illegal, risky and chaotic migration.”

The policy grants Cubans residency when they touch down on U.S. soil, encouraging migration, yet does not provide Cubans with legal or safe channels to reach the country.

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