

# HAITIAN MIGRANTS

## Relatives await word as search at sea wanes

### Authorities in Turks and Caicos scaled back the search for Haitians missing from a capsized sloop, and residents said some people paid \$6,000 to get on the vessel.

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PROVIDENCIALES, Turks and Caicos --  
Camillus DuRosca received the call early Friday morning.

His mother, on the line from Haiti, wanted to learn what he knew about the migrant-packed sailboat that had overturned two miles before reaching Five Cays, a scaled-down version of Miami's Little Haiti in Turks and Caicos.

"She said my sister and brother were on the boat," said DuRosca, 32, a steelworker. "She wouldn't stop crying."

Interviews on Sunday with Haitian residents of the Five Cays area offer a snapshot of the estimated 160 people aboard the crowded vessel that capsized early Friday off the coast of Providenciales Island. Some paid thousands for a spot on the boat, family members say.

Thirty-six migrants -- 23 women and 13 men -- died in the accident. Police say authorities rescued 78 Haitians, but more than 40 remain missing in shark-populated waters. The survivors are being held at a detention center near South Dock, where the wooden vessel has been docked since the accident.

Meanwhile, local authorities said Sunday that they had scaled back the search for those missing, and a British team investigating the tragic incident said it could take seven months before the public knows the findings.

"We will continue to do our searches, but on a lesser scale," Police Inspector Hilton Duncan told The Miami Herald. "If anybody's out there, we're not likely to find survivors."

The three British investigators met Sunday with Turks officials, police and the coroner. On Sunday afternoon, two members of the team were seen measuring parts of the severely damaged boat with yellow tape.

The Turks and Caicos government requested the probe, said Capt. Martin Harper.

Harper said it was "too early" to answer questions about the U.S. Coast Guard's earlier claim that Turks officials said the boat sank as it was being towed to shore.

"We investigate, we interview . . . until we're happy we've got a full picture of what happened," he said.

The Turks and Caicos, a British territory of some 30 islands about 150 miles north of Haiti, is often a stopping point en route to Miami for Haitians fleeing their impoverished nation.

Residents of Five Cays -- a hilly area of makeshift homes -- say the sailboat left Cap-Haitien, a seaside city in northern Haiti, either Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. It contained passengers from Cap-Haitien and nearby cities, such as Limbé and Dondon.

Some of the passengers, according to Five Cays residents, paid up to \$6,000 for a spot on the 30-foot vessel. They included brothers, sisters, cousins.

Police and immigration officials have prevented residents and the press from speaking to the detained migrants. Local reports say that Haitian officials have arrived to help determine where the dead will be buried.

"I want to know what I can do, but there really isn't anything I can do, so I'm just waiting," said DuRosca, the steelworker who lives in a barren room decorated with a bed, two chairs, a dresser and a broken mirror.

DuRosca said his 36-year-old brother Gerard, a carpenter, and his 26-year-old sister Saint Julia Michèle, a street merchant, were aboard the boat. He said he doesn't know whether his sister and brother made it to shore or perished at sea.

"The situation in Haiti calls for [taking a] chance," DuRosca said.

The U.S. Coast Guard interdicted 704 Haitians in April -- nearly as many as were intercepted in all of 2006, according to the Coast Guard. Since January, the Coast Guard has picked up 909 Haitians at sea.

In some cases, however, the migrants reach shore. Charete Meren is among them. "I came here looking for work, but I haven't found work," said Meren, 45, who believes her 21-year-old sister Marie Pierre was aboard the boat.

On Sunday, dozens of churchgoers poured into the Messenger Baptist Church in Five Cays. Organs piped. Hymns were sung. And pastors lamented the accident, asking congregants to remember what happened.

They also called on the congregation to urge family and friends against risking their lives to leave their country by sea.

"We need everybody to come here legally," Pastor Frandy Antoine said.