

# U.S. to build Cuba migrant center

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico --

The United States, which has been planning for possible waves of fleeing Cubans when Fidel Castro dies, has hired a Florida company to build a temporary complex to hold migrants at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, the military said.

Islands Mechanical Contractors Inc. of Jacksonville, Fla., has won a \$16.5 million contract to build a "migrant operations complex" at the base, a U.S. enclave in eastern Cuba, the U.S. Defense Department said.

The fenced complex would include showers and laundry facilities and is to be finished by May 2008, according to a Defense Department publication that announces contracts.

The announcement late Monday did not specify the capacity of the complex and a Defense Department spokesman said additional details were not immediately available. Bob Turnage, the president of Islands Mechanical, declined to discuss the project.

The contract announcement did not specify that the complex would be for Cuban migrants, but Navy officials told The Associated Press in January that they were preparing for a potential Cuban exodus because of Castro's health problems and would hold migrants at Guantanamo, where the U.S. also has detained about 380 men on suspicion of links to al-Qaida or the Taliban.

Guantanamo was used to hold thousands of Haitian and Cuban migrants in the 1990s. U.S. officials had said they would keep the migrants on the other side of the base from the detainees and would have to increase troop levels to provide additional security.