

9/11 workers treated in Cuba fear political attack

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NEW YORK --

(AP) -- Three Ground Zero workers who accompanied filmmaker Michael Moore on a trip to Cuba for medical treatment featured in his new movie *Sicko* charged Friday they were targeted by the U.S. government because of their participation.

"It's ridiculous after what we did for the city and the country on that day, that they won't allow us to go 90 miles offshore to get treated," said Reggie Cervantes, a 46-year-old EMT who worked with only a thin dust mask after the World Trade Center collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Brooklyn-based worker, among the first responders performing triage on the street below the burning towers, now suffers from severe pulmonary diseases, as well as kidney and liver problems.

Moore and the ailing 9/11 workers went to Cuba for treatment in March despite a U.S. trade embargo restricting travel to the communist country. The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control sent Moore a letter in May notifying the filmmaker that he was under investigation for travel violations.

Although the three workers have not received similar letters, all said they were expecting them. Cervantes was joined by another EMT, John Graham, and a 9/11 volunteer, William Maher, along with their lawyer, noted constitutional free speech attorney Martin Garbus.

Garbus said any investigation of the three was politically motivated, a charge made 11 days ago by Moore's attorney, David Boies. In a letter to the Treasury Department, Boies noted that Moore is well known as a harsh critic of the Bush administration -- particularly in his Sept. 11 movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Moore had asked the Treasury Department last fall to approve his Cuba trip under rules permitting travel there by journalists. Moore made the trip after receiving no response.

All three workers said they were denied treatment for various conditions by U.S. insurance companies that refused to pay for coverage. Cervantes, who now lives in Oklahoma, said she has no regrets about her Cuban excursion, where she received treatments for her ailments.

"I would have gone to the moon," she said. "We need treatment."