



**United States Department of State
Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration**

**FACT SHEET
Migrant Operations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba**

Since the mid-1990s, the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has provided protection services for migrants at the United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Most migrants who arrive at the Naval Station are interdicted at sea in the Caribbean region by the U.S. Coast Guard. On rare occasions, migrants arrive at the Naval Station directly, either by land or sea. Every year, many migrants lose their lives or are exploited while trying to reach the United States. Because the United States seeks to discourage these dangerous voyages by sea and to encourage safe, legal, and orderly migration, interdicted migrants are not brought to the United States.

It is longstanding U.S. policy and practice to provide migrants with an opportunity to seek and receive protection against persecution or torture. Migrants intercepted at sea in the Caribbean are brought to the Migrant Operations Center (MOC) on the Naval Station if U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) determines that they have a credible fear of persecution upon return to their country of origin on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, or if they would likely face torture upon return to their country of origin. If, after additional interviews, USCIS determines that a migrant has a "well-founded fear" of persecution or is "more likely than not" to face torture if returned to his or her country of origin, he or she may be permitted to remain at the MOC. The U.S. Department of State houses and cares for persons in need of protection at the MOC while it finds a third country for resettlement. Migrants who do not meet the required threshold are repatriated to their country of origin. There have been 417 migrants resettled to third countries through the MOC program since 1996.

Protected migrants are neither detained nor imprisoned, and are free at any time to return to their country of origin. However, most choose to stay at the MOC until a resettlement opportunity arises. Protected migrants live in a relatively unrestricted environment, participate in recreational activities, and are allowed to work. Some restrictions of movement, however, are necessary due to security concerns at the Naval Station.

A social service program run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been established on the Naval Station to help migrants integrate into the social fabric of the Naval Station, including helping them find jobs. Protected migrants are housed in a dorm-style setting; receive food and health care; may establish bank accounts; use public transportation; attend religious services of their choice; and communicate with their relatives. They also receive English language, livelihoods, and computer skills training.

The management of the MOC at the Naval Station is a joint effort of the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Defense serves as a host to the MOC by providing infrastructure and resource support. The MOC is not connected in any way with the DOD's detention mission also located at the Naval Station.

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