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American Anti-War Activists March in Cuba

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Associated Press

December 7, 2005

HAVANA -- American anti-war activists marched Wednesday from the eastern Cuban city of Santiago toward the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay to protest treatment of terror suspects there.

The 25 members of the Witness Against Torture group had hoped to begin their daylong march a day earlier, but spent Tuesday negotiating with Cuban communist officials about how close they could get to the American military installation, the protesters said by telephone.

Cuba and the United States have had no diplomatic relations for more than four decades, and the American base is surrounded by a miles-wide Cuban military zone peppered with mines.

It seemed unlikely that the marchers would be allowed to cross the military zone to reach the U.S. base's gate and demand that American sentries let them visit the prisoners, as they initially had planned.

"We're really saddened and horrified by what's going on in Guantanamo and the other prisons" where the U.S. military holds terror suspects, said marcher Susan Crane of Baltimore. "Our hope is to get as close as we can (to the base)."

"We want the prisoners to know we care about them," she added.

Most of the marchers arrived Monday in Santiago, about 50 miles southwest of Guantanamo, from the Dominican Republic. Among them was Frida Berrigan, daughter of the late Phil Berrigan, a former Roman Catholic priest whose fight against the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons helped ignite a generation of anti-war dissent.

The United States holds about 500 terror suspects at the remote base in Guantanamo. The U.S. government says they are enemy combatants, not prisoners of war, and are not entitled to the same rights afforded under the Geneva Conventions.