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HOLT-CUBA
BY GEORGE GEDDA

KENNEDY, LL

WASHINGTON (AP) -- THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS DECLINED TO ATTACH SIGNIFICANCE TO A VISIT TO CUBA BY A RANKING AIDE OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE.

PAT HOLT, THE COMMITTEE'S CHIEF OF STAFF, ARRIVED IN CUBA A FEW DAYS AGO AND, ACCORDING TO REPORTS, IS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH PRIME MINISTER FIDEL CASTRO.

STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS SAID TODAY HOLT'S PASSPORT WAS VALIDATED FOR THE TRIP BUT THAT THE U.S. POLICY OF DISCOURAGING TRAVEL TO CUBA REMAINS UNCHANGED.

UNDER QUESTIONING, THE OFFICIALS CONCEDED THAT PAST ATTEMPTS BY HOLT FOR PERMISSION TO VISIT THE ISLAND HAVE BEEN REFUSED. THEY EMPHASIZED THE "FACT-FINDING NATURE" OF HOLT'S VISIT AND SAID THE OVER-ALL U.S. POLICY TOWARD CUBA IS UNCHANGED.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY IS ONE OF SUPPORT FOR THE ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC EMBARGO OF THE ISLAND IMPOSED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES 10 YEARS AGO.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OFFICIALS WERE UNAVAILABLE FOR COMMENT ON HOLT'S VISIT. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, CASTRO SAID THE TRIP WAS THE PRODUCT OF AN EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN CASTRO AND THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, SEN. J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT, D-ARK.

THE REPORTS SAID CASTRO TOLD NEWSMEN IN HAVANA THAT FULBRIGHT HAS NOT MAINTAINED A BAD ATTITUDE TOWARD CUBA AND THAT "ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION HE CONDEMNED THE BLOCKADE AGAINST US AND THE U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE REVOLUTION."

CASTRO ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID HE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER.

"I BELIEVE THAT KISSINGER IS NOT A NEGATIVE FIGURE IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY," CASTRO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING. "HE IS A REALISTIC MAN. BUT SINCE THE BLOCKADE IS NOT NEGOTIABLE WE WILL NOT AGREE TO TALK WITH ANYONE UNTIL THIS MEASURE IS UNCONDITIONALLY LIFTED."

07-05-74 14:14EDT