

Issue Date: **March 30, 1990**

Cuba:

U.S. Coast Guard Fires on Ship

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A U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat fired on a Cuban-chartered freighter in international waters off the coast of Mexico January 31.

The Cuban boat, the Hermann, which was registered in Panama, had refused a request from the U.S. vessel, the Chincoteague, to allow boarding just outside Mexican territorial waters in the Gulf of Mexico. The Chincoteague, which had been following the Hermann for some 20 hours, opened fire, damaging the Cuban vessel. The damaged ship managed to reach Mexican territorial waters, and no injuries were reported.

The Coast Guard said it had sought to stop the Hermann as part of its program to interdict vessels suspected of carrying drugs. Permission for boarding had been received from Panama's Office of Maritime Registry. The Panamanian office later gave permission for the Coast Guard to use "disabling fire" to force the ship to stop.

The Cuban government told the American interests section at the Swiss embassy in Havana that it had ordered the Hermann's captain not to allow the ship to be boarded.

Mexican authorities searched the Hermann when it arrived in Mexican territorial waters and again at the port of Tampico, but they reported February 1 that no drugs were found.

Cuban President Fidel Castro greeted the Hermann's crew when they flew to Havana February 1. He praised the crew's courage "in the face of a Yankee attack."

The Cuban interests section at the Czechoslovak embassy in Washington lodged a protest over the incident January 31.