

# Crew took jobs, violating visas

## Hotel warned about hiring undocumented workers

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FLORIDA TODAY

By taking jobs on U.S. soil, some crew members of the Mirage I were in violation of their seaman's visas and were detained on the Ocean Club Cruises ship at Port Canaveral, immigration officials confirmed.

It is one of several issues related to the crew that have arisen since Ocean Club Cruises, which owns the Mirage I, declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in December, leaving foreign crew

members stranded in the United States with no way home.

Zachary Mann, a Miami-based spokesman for Customs and Border Patrol, a division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, confirmed Customs and Border Patrol agents went to the DoubleTree hotel in Cocoa Beach on Friday, and issued a warning to hotel management about the penalties of employing undocumented workers.

"The Mirage employees were then detained on the ship Friday night and they were also detained on the ship Saturday

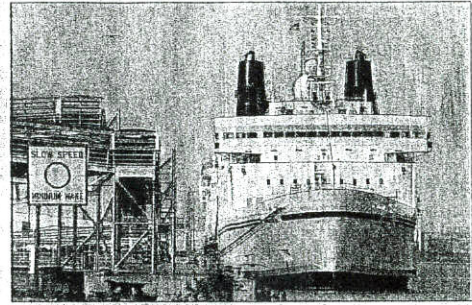
night," he said.

On Saturday night, Gov. Jeb Bush appeared at a Republican fund-raiser at the hotel.

DoubleTree officials could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Separately, a Turkish crew member of Mirage I ran away at Orlando International Airport just prior to boarding a plane bound for his home this week, Mann said.

"The man is still at large, and we have an all-points bulletin out for this gentleman," Mann said. "It is the responsibility of  
**See VISAS, 4B**



Michael R. Brown, FLORIDA TODAY

**Stuck.** The cruise ship Mirage I sits at its berth in Port Canaveral while cruise line officials try to work out money problems.

## Visas taken from working crew members

VISAS, from 1B

the ship's agent to return these people to their homes."

Mann declined to comment further about the details of the Turkish national's escape, other than to say all the proper law-enforcement officials were looking for the Turkish man.

In the meantime, the next step in the bankruptcy proceedings rests in the hands of Ocean Club, which is expected to present a budget to all parties that have submitted claims in bankruptcy

court.

"Ocean Club will provide a budget, and if it is acceptable, we will proceed," said Tonya Meister, attorney for 45 Ocean Club crew members, some of whom have been sent home. "If that budget is not acceptable, we will go to court again."

Port Canaveral Authority spokeswoman Dixie Sansom said much of the garbage aboard the ship was hauled away Tuesday, despite the fact the port has not been paid its more than \$245,000 in dockage fees.

"The port wants to maintain sanitary conditions in any area we have jurisdiction, we don't want overflowing Dumpsters," she said. "The ships have on-board sanitation treatment, and we are monitoring the waters around the ship to make sure there's no discharge. But, overall, we're happy for the crew members that the arrangements are being made so that all of them will be able to return home." ■

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