# Cuba Sets Prison Terms for Poisonous Alcohol Deaths

The Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — More than a dozen islanders have been convicted in a case of poisonous black-market alcohol that killed 11 and sickened nearly 100, the Communist Party newspaper Granma reported Wednesday.

Two guards at the University of Havana's Institute of Pharmacy and Foods were found guilty of stealing about 16 gallons (60 liters) of methyl alcohol and sentenced to 27 and 30 years in prison for theft, negligent homicide and causing grave injury.

Another guard was sentenced to six years for playing a lesser role in the theft. All three were ordered to pay compensation to the victims and their families.

Others received lesser terms ranging from a few months up to 5 years on charges including receipt of stolen goods and attempting to conceal a crime. The Institute's dean and other officials were dismissed from their posts.

"The criminal treatment of this case demonstrates the will of our Government and its authorities to preserve citizen safety by confronting crime and illegalities, for which there will never be impunity," Granma said.

"Nevertheless," it added, "regrettable incidents such as this are a lesson for all those citizens who — perhaps without realizing the negligence of their actions — abet unscrupulous elements who are capable of selling death itself."

Cuba occasionally reports incidents of mass poisonings from black-market food or moonshine liquor.

This latest case emerged last July after dozens of people went to emergency rooms with symptoms of severe poisoning.

Methyl alcohol, also called methanol or "wood alcohol," is used in research labs. It is highly toxic for humans, with the potential to kill or cause permanent health problems such as blindness.

Initial reports last year said seven people had died from ingesting the poisonous moonshine, and 41 were sickened.

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