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Cuban Athlete AWOL in Moscow

By The Moscow Times

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Cuban athlete Orlando Ortega appears to have defected after abandoning his national team during the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Moscow.

"Having run the 100-meter-hurdles, Orlando Ortega left the national team, deciding not to return home," a representative for the Cuban Athletics Federation said.

The federation did not give his whereabouts and Russia's Federal Migration Service said it has received no information about the AWOL sprint hurdler, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Ortega had been eliminated in an early rounds of the championships, where Cuba recorded its worst result since 1987, winning only two bronze medals and one silver.

Ortega, 22, is the most recent in a long tradition of athletes defecting from the impoverished Caribbean island-nation, which heavily supports athletics but places tight restriction on emigration and travel.

Last week Cuban baseball player and former most valuable player, Jose Dariel Abreu, was reported to have defected to pursue a multi-million dollar American baseball contract.

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