

Missing Cuban Athlete Turns Up in Italy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Orlando Ortega Competes in a Heat at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. **Martin Meissner**

The Cuban hurdler who went missing during the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Moscow is staying with friends in Italy.

Orlando Ortega abandoned the Cuban team on Aug. 21 and was thought to have defected, though Russia's Federal Migration Service never managed to figure out where he had gone.

He plans to go from Padua to the U.S. where he will join his mother in Tampa, the athlete told The Associated Press Tuesday.

Ortega said he decided to leave because he was disillusioned with the Cuban sports officials who suspended him for 6 months for refusing to compete at a trial event in June, Lenta.ru reported Wednesday.

"They committed a huge injustice toward me and my coach. Two months before the championship I was deprived of the opportunity to compete," Ortega said.

The suspension was later lifted and the athlete was able to take part in the championships in Moscow.

But things didn't go to plan for Ortega, who crashed out of the 110-meter-hurdles competition in the preliminary rounds.

Ortega, 22, was considered one of Cuba's most promising athletes. At the 2012 Olympics in London he finished sixth in the 110-meter hurdles final.

On Tuesday, Ortega refused to talk about his future in athletics.

"The only thing I want at the moment is to reunite with my mother in the United States," he said.

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