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Carmichael, Scott W.

True Believer: Inside the Investigation and Capture of Ana Montes, Cuba's Master Spy

Annapolis: Naval Institute Press
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On March 20, 2002, Ana Belen Montes, the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) primary political/military analyst on Cuba since 1992, pled guilty in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., to one count of conspiracy to commit espionage. Montes admitted that for sixteen years she had provided top-secret information to the Cuban regime via computer disks twice a month. At clandestine meetings in the Washington, D.C., area, she gave verbal briefings to her foreign handlers and also received instructions through encrypted short-wave radio transmissions. In consequence of Montes' actions, Fidel Castro formulated the intelligence assessment of Cuba for use by U.S. war strategists. Montes received a twenty-five year prison sentence in exchange for divulging to the FBI all she knew of Cuban intelligence activities.

Scott Carmichael is the DIA counter-intelligence investigator who pursued this case for five years. This book is his own story on dealing with the frustrating and slow-moving federal government procedures needed to develop a criminal case against Montes. The FBI's enormous bureaucracy, which had to be coaxed into acquiring funds, manpower, and the capability of making an arrest, at first rejected Carmichael's investigative request.

The Montes inquiry, which began and stalled in November 1996, was renewed in September 2000 after the CIA encountered persistent difficulty in managing Cuban agents and running technical intelligence operations. The FBI had obtained information, probably from a defector, of

an unknown U.S. government employee spying for Cuba, whom Carmichael quickly identified as Montes. Three months later, the FBI began a full-field investigation that led to her arrest on September 21, 2001.

When detained, Montes was a forty-four-year-old who had never married, although "She had a number of boyfriends throughout her life" (58). She is a Puerto Rican who regularly attended Mass and "was raised in a family that advocated achieving the political independence of Puerto Rico from the United States by peaceful means" (147). This has been a major tenet of Fidel Castro's foreign policy, making him a hero to her. Ideology motivated Montes' treason, especially her opposition to U.S. policy toward Cuba and Nicaragua and her affinity for Central American Marxist guerrillas.

The Cuban Directorate General of Intelligence (DGI) recruited Montes while she worked for the Department of Justice and attended graduate courses at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) during 1982-84. The author omits mentioning that in 1978, SAIS launched its Cuba Exchange Program, which has served as a breeding ground for espionage recruitment and academic apologists of the Cuban dictatorship.

In 1985, Montes was hired by the DIA, even after admitting to prior "use of marihuana and cocaine" during 1979 and 1982 (154). During the four years before her arrest, Montes was afflicted with anxiety and sleeplessness and was regularly treated with psychiatric counseling and prescription medication (72, 85). Yet, she continued shaping perceptions and influencing White House policy and even drafting the remarks of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he testified before Congress on Cuban issues. The DIA, the CIA, and the U.S. Army rewarded her with certificates of distinction and special achievement awards for her work.

As the principal analyst for El Salvador and Nicaragua in the late 1980s, Montes knew all aspects of Salvadoran military strength and the U.S. efforts to support it and the Contra forces in Nicaragua. This information apparently led to the death of an American Green Beret trainer in El Salvador. Montes also divulged the names of four American intelligence officers working in Cuba, who were consequently subjected to counter-intelligence operations. She also revealed a U.S. "Special Access Program" in which she had worked since 1997, and indicated the location of various Cuban military installations and certain military weapons uncovered by American intelligence.

This book leaves many questions unanswered because the author claims that some investigative details "are far too sensitive for public consumption" and he also does not want to "reveal sensitive details" (ix) to Cuban intelligence agents reading his work. Montes became one of the longest running and most dangerous

spies in U.S. history and Castro's best known asset in the intelligence community. Cuba probably shared her information with U.S. enemy nations. Yet, the Cuban government has not publicly awarded her the hero status or advocacy given to its five other spies jailed in America since 1998. Carmichael concludes that it was so easy for the DGI to plant Montes in the DIA, that it has probably also penetrated other government agencies.

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