

Police hunt killer of detente advocate

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The peaceful negotiation Luciano Nieves sought with Cuba ended under the white sheet that covered his bullet-riddled body in the parking lot of Variety Children's Hospital.

Nieves, 43, was gunned down by two men in the doctor's parking lot of the hospital yesterday afternoon, where he had just left his wife and 11-year-old son, Fernando.

As Nieves died, the assailants sped away in a white Volkswagen, police said. There were no leads to the identities of the gunmen.

Nieves, an advocate of what he termed "a political opening with Cuba," told The Miami News only Wednesday "the only way out for Cubans is the political opening with elements within the island, who want Castro out in a peaceful manner."

He had been threatened several times by Cuban groups which advocated a military takeover instead of political solutions.

Two years ago, he was hit in the head with a chair in a Little Havana restaurant by a customer who disagreed with his political views.

His attempts to form a "revolutionary congress" in Jamaica to discuss easing of political relations with Fidel Castro last year were termed "tyranny" by militant Cuban organizations.

"Many will look upon his death as a murder," a member of one of those organizations told The Miami News, "but a great number of others will say it was an execution. He has made a lot of people unhappy. His actions can be called treason . . ."

Nieves had met his wife at the hospital yesterday where she had taken their son, who was having difficulty breathing.

Hospital spokesmen said the father was in a hurry, and insisted his boy be treated before anybody else.

The father left his wife and son on the second floor lobby, then walked out into the parking lot. Medical personnel in the emergency room heard shots, dashed out and found Nieves.

He had been a high-ranking officer in Fidel Castro's rebel army before coming to the United States in 1963. Two brothers were reported still to be majors in the Cuban army.