

In Assassination Efforts Probed

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Federal authorities are investigating evidence that a loosely knit group of Miami-based Cuban exiles planned, financed and carried out abortive attacks against a Cuban ambassador in Argentina in August 1975 and a Cuban consul in Mexico in July 1976.



BOSCH

Four men have been identified by federal authorities as having been connected with one or both attacks. Three of the four have links to anti-Fidel Castro activist Dr. Orlando Bosch, but no formal exile group is believed responsible for the attacks, authorities said.

Authorities now believe that the two international attack missions were directed from Miami, and show the shifting and informal nature of terrorist activities, in which personal ties rather than group allegiances prevail.

AN INVESTIGATION by a U.S. grand jury in Miami has brought to the international scope of anti-Castro efforts stemming from Miami, federal agents say.

Part of the federal grand jury investigation in Miami is based on new information from Mexican police who captured two Miami-based Cuban exiles after the foiled attack on the Cuban consul in Merida, Mexico, last year.

Although the target of the attack, Cuban consul Daniel Ferrer Fernández, escaped injury, a Cuban intelligence officer with him, Darío Díaz Díaz, was killed with a gun traced back to a Miami gun shop, authorities said.

The two men captured by the Mexican police after the incident, Asmar Jiménez Escobedo and Ortes Ruiz Hernández, gave statements implicating themselves, Mexican authorities say.

THEY ADD that the two Miami exiles captured have alleged that Bosch was among those who plotted the Mexican operation, along with other Miami-based Cubans.

A third Miami-area exile, Gustavo Castillo, who supposedly escaped from Mexico after the attack, has since been charged by Mexican authorities with participating in the attack.

Castillo has been indicted here in the federal grand jury for making a false statement in a passport application, after declaring that he had lost his passport. Mexican authorities say that during their investigation they recovered Castillo's passport, together with the P-93 Heckler-Coch pistol used in the attack.

The P-93 Heckler-Coch pistol has the unusual characteristic of leaving no land and groove marks on the bullets passing through its barrel.

WORKING WITH information provided by Mexican authorities, local and federal officials have traced the pistol to a gun shop on Southwest Eighth Street in Miami. According to sworn FBI testimony, the gun was bought in May and taken to Castillo in June 1976.

Castillo and Ruiz also have been traced by the Dade County Public Safety Department with placing a sign outside the Whitten Memorial

Student Union Building at the University of Miami in April of last year, shortly before black activist Angela Davis was scheduled to speak.

The Mexican investigation into the aborted attack on the Cuban consul also produced evidence that strengthened the belief by U.S. agents that one of the participants in the Mexican attack also took part in the 1975 machinegun assault against Cuban Ambassador to Argentina Emilio Aragonés Navarro.

FEDERAL authorities now say that Jiménez, a 40-year-old railroad employe, participated in both attacks. Their beliefs were strengthened when Mexican authorities recovered Jiménez' passport, stamped by Argentine Customs.

After the July attack, the Mexican police also recovered Castillo's U.S. passport, his and Jiménez' Mexican tourist visas; consecutively numbered Mexicana airline tickets in those names, indicating travel from Miami to Cozumel July 19; and the two guns used in the attack.

Federal authorities say that Jiménez entered Argentina with two sets of documents, his own and a set of false papers.

U.S. officials believe that Jiménez, together with Aldo Vera Sereno, and two other, still-unnamed men, participated in the attempt to kill the Cuban Ambassador in Argentina, almost a year before the Mexican attack took place.

VERA, A 43-year-old former top police officer of the Castro regime, was shot to death in Puerto Rico in October 1976, an attack, his friends believe, motivated by pro-Castro forces. Immediately after his assassination, Puerto Rican police said the motive for his killing was political. Twenty-four hours later, they said he had been slain in a gangland battle.

Three of the four Cuban exiles who authorities believe were involved in one or both of the attacks against the Castro diplomats have had past associations with Bosch, who is now in jail in Venezuela, accused of planning an explosion aboard a Cubana de Aviación plane last October in which all 73 passengers died.

The two men held by Mexican authorities — Jiménez, and Ruiz, a 28-year-old refugee who lived in Hialeah — were members of Bosch's "Cuban Action," a Miami-based anti-Castro group. Federal authorities say Jiménez joined Cuban Action two years ago.

AUTHORITIES add that Vera, whose family lives in Miami, was a close friend and associate of Bosch.

Castillo, a 30-year-old unemployed plastering contractor now jailed in Miami, does not belong to Bosch's Cuban Action group.

He is considered by federal authorities, however, to be a close friend of Franc Castro, a close friend of Bosch. They say that Castillo was in Venezuela with Bosch at the time of the Cuban airline explosion. Venezuelan authorities, who shortly thereafter arrested Bosch and several others thought to be involved in the explosion, later expelled Castillo from the country.

Federal authorities say Franc Castro and Castillo belong to the

Area Task Force Proposed

Citing an apparent relationship between narcotics traffickers and terrorists, U.S. Attorney Robert Rust said Friday that law-enforcement agencies from Stuart to Key West are being invited to join a joint intelligence task force.

Rust said the main effort of the task force would be to speed up and broaden the flow of information about narcotics and terrorist activities that affect the South Florida area.

"There are many narcotics traffickers who show up in terrorist activities, and many terrorists who show up in narcotics activities, so we think there is a real relationship," said Rust. "Narcotics are one way terrorists fund their activities."

Rust said that the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Miami Police Department, Customs, Dade Public Safety Department, Florida Department of Criminal Law Enforcement and Florida Highway Patrol have already agreed to participate in the intelligence-sharing agency.

"Most agencies have one department concerned with narcotics and one concerned with homicides and terrorism, and the two may not share information locally," explained Rust. "We hope that this task force will increase communications at the local and regional level."

More than 200 law-enforcement agencies have jurisdiction in the South Florida area, according to Rust. The large number has impeded the flow of information, they say, because no central clearinghouse exists.

But the new task force will have no federal funds to support it, Rust said, and will meet only when a majority of the agencies asks for a meeting to exchange information.

"Unlike most of the U.S., this area has a dual problem with narcotics and bombs," said Rust. "Hopefully, we can get the law-enforcement agencies together on the intelligence level and make a dent in such activities."

Cuban National Liberation Front (FLNC), a militant anti-Castro organization. Both the FLNC and Bosch's Cuban Action group were among the five, exile groups that merged in mid-1976 and claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks on Cuban interests outside the United States.

THE ATTACK against the Cuban Government official in Mexico has been well documented in the press and by Mexican authorities, who say three men ambushed the Cuban consul in Merida to try to kidnap him. In the ensuing gun battle, Díaz Díaz, a Cuban intelligence officer, was killed.

The August 13, 1975, attack against the Cuban ambassador in Buenos Aires, Argentina, has not been documented as fully.

Federal authorities say that Jiménez, Vera and their two unidentified companions entered Argentina on or about August 10, 1975. Three days later, they say, the four were waiting with submachineguns outside the embassy building.

According to the federal investigators' version of the attack, as the Cuban ambassador's car approached, the ambushers opened fire, shattering the vehicle's windows. A short gun battle ensued as the fire was answered from inside the embassy. Nobody was killed or wounded in the incident.

FEDERAL authorities say that

after the attack Vera, Jiménez and one other man flew to Montevideo, Uruguay, where they gave United Press International a "military communiqué" claiming responsibility for the attacks on Cuban government officials in Buenos Aires.

The UPI account of the event states that two men "with a Cuban accent" handed the bureau chief a note in which they took credit for the attack against the Cuban Ambassador in nearby Argentina.

From Montevideo the trio returned to Miami by way of Chile, possibly Colombia and El Salvador, where, according to local sources, they spent four days at the Ritz Hotel.

The next day, Vera caught a Eastern Airlines flight to San Juan, Puerto Rico, authorities say. Fifteen months later he was killed there.

Mexican officials believe that after the attack against the Cuban consul in Mexico, Castillo escaped to Miami. Federal sources say he crossed into the United States by way of the Texas border.

A federal agent testified this week in court that after his return to Miami, Castillo went to Caracas, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, where he was arrested Jan. 21.

Miami exile sources say that the two attacks against Cuban diplomats were financed locally by at least three \$1,000 gifts.