

Three Exiles From Miami Arrested in Cuba

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Three young Cuban exiles from Miami were arrested in Cuba and charged Saturday with trying to "infiltrate" the country.

The men are Luis Manuel de la Caridad Zuniga, 23, of 2465 NW 15th St., an engineer who worked at a Miami lumber company; Rodolfo Camps Verdecia, 25, of 1065 SW Eighth St., a seaman who had enrolled at Miami Dade Community College's north campus and Feliciano Miguel Sale, who had been living with his parents at 1455 W. 28th St. in Hialeah since he arrived in Miami July 1. All had a record of anti-Castro activities in Cuba, relatives said.

The Cuban government confirmed that the men had been arrested in the past. Zuniga and Camps had served time in prison for trying to escape the country illegally before both escaped from jail and piloted a stolen boat to Miami Jan. 28. Salez swam to the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo early in July after serving four years in prison for anti-Castro activities.

THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT charged that the men were "counter-revolutionaries" belonging to the anti-Castro organization Alpha 66 in Miami. Alpha 66 spokesman Andres Nazario-Sargen confirmed that the men were members. Alpha press secretary Diego Medina said their mission "was a mixture of personal reasons and work for the freedom of Cuba."

The Cuban news agency, Prensa Latina, said Zuniga and Salez were arrested Thursday aboard a boat in Cuban waters near Southern Cuba after leaving the U.S. base in Guantanamo. Campa was arrested in the coastal town of Santa Cruz del Norte, northeast of Havana, where he was waiting to be picked up by the other two, Prensa Latina said.

The news agency did not charge U.S. government involvement.

A State Department spokesman in Washington said the United States government has only sketchy information of the incident but can say the men were not working for the United States.

"You can be sure we are not sanctioning this kind of action," said the spokesman. "We will try to find out what happened but there was no U.S. involvement."

The spokesman said the United States can do nothing about the men's fates since they are not American citizens.

"If they are Cuban citizens it is really a matter between them and their own government," the spokesman said.

The three men were charged with leaving or attempting to leave Cuba illegally. In addition, Camps was charged with an old count, attempting to steal a freighter in 1970. Zuniga also was charged with an old count, attacking military units.

"We had not seen my son for a year since we left Cuba last year," said Miguel Salez Sr. from his Hialeah apartment. "When he came last month the first thing he did was to borrow a typewriter and write poems."

SALEZ, DESCRIBED as a poet, an intellectual and a patriot by friends and relatives, was to be a speaker at the Abdala Organization National Congress at the University of Miami Saturday.

Antonio Iglesias, a cousin who lived with Zuniga, said Zuniga had been nervous in the last few days before he disappeared and had been talking about how much he missed his mother but had given no indication he would go to Cuba.

"Luis was trying to adapt to live in this country but it was not easy for him and he missed his family and I don't quite think he was

settled," said Iglesias. "I had no idea he was involved in any revolutionary activities and had I known I would have taken it out of his mind."

ZUNIGA AND SALEZ were said by relatives to be close friends from Cuba. Salez's father explained Saturday, "I am sure if Miguel knew there was a friend in jail or someone who needed to get out of Cuba he would volunteer because he has always given everything for others."

Campa, according to his cousin, Carlos Verdecia, was divorced, had a five-year-old son living in Cuba and was depressed about having left his mother behind. His father, who refused to discuss the case Saturday, lives in Miami.

Campa had served five years for attempting to hijack a freighter when he was an officer in the Cuban merchant marine in 1968.

Prensa Latina, said the Cuban government confiscated the boat, identified by a Miami acquaintance, as a 26-foot inboard, and also confiscated two rifles, a revolver and two fragmentation grenades.

"Miguelito has given the Cuban government a lot of problems," said Salez's mother, Aida, who sat next to the telephone in their small Hialeah apartment answering calls from friends who heard the news on the radio.

She said Salez, Zuniga and Camps often went to the beach in Miami together. She said they served time together in the same Cuban prison.

"He was against the Communist regime because they allow no freedom of expression," said Salez's father. "He wanted to publish a book of poems about the plight of the political prisoners in Cuba."

The father said he and his wife heard about their son's capture on a Spanish-language radio station in Miami Saturday morning.

They said that Salez had been missing three days and that they feared he was involved in a clandestine mission in Cuba.

But they had no knowledge of their son being part of a political Cuban group in Miami.

"He didn't know anything about the sea," his father said, "but I know that if he had a friend back in Cuba that needed his help, he would go back without hesitation."

"He didn't work during the month that he lived with us in Miami," his father said. "The first thing he did was borrow a typewriter so he could write his poems. I told him he didn't have to work yet. I told him that now that he had freedom of expression, he should develop his ambition to write . . ."

"Cubans in exile have to get together and do whatever they can to save the lives of these three men," his father said. "My son is like a star that has risen to fight for freedom of expression. We must fight to keep that star shining."

"If other mothers, Cuban and American, felt like I feel right now," Mrs. Salea said, "I know they would fight along with me to save my son's life."

Sargen, of Alpha 66, said: "We confirm that the three men arrested in Cuba are members of Alpha 66. They were on a secret mission to look for political prisoners. The mission had been prepared for a long time."

Medina, Alpha's press secretary, said the mission had been conceived for a number of purposes.

"You know, there are always a number of reasons when a group goes to Cuba, there was the personal situation to bring relatives and also political secret missions," said Medina.