

Ex-terrorist's shooting blamed

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Ricardo (Monkey) Morales Navarette lay unconscious with a bullet in his brain Tuesday as Metro police sought the man who shot the notorious terrorist-turned-informant during an argument late Monday over a bar tab.

A single bullet struck Morales in the head during a quarrel over the bill charged to a woman friend in the lounge at Rogers on the Green Restaurant in Key Biscayne, Metro-Dade police said.

The wound was so severe that doctors chose against operating when Morales was rushed to Mercy Hospital. "His brain is destroyed," said one of the physicians who examined Morales.

Authorities said family members were expected to order Morales taken off life-support equipment soon.

An admitted murderer, Ricardo Morales has worked as an agent for several governments, a mercenary in the Belgian Congo, a bomb expert for Miami gamblers and an informant.

Police have not filed charges in the 11:41 p.m. shooting. But detectives said they have identified the gunman who fled the lounge after the shooting. Through a lawyer, the suspect, whom police would not name, agreed Tuesday to submit to questioning.

"We know who was involved in the altercation with Morales," said Metro Lt. Al Harper. "We have a strong suspect in the case."

Police say they are unsure whether to be-

lieve the shooting stemmed solely from an argument over the payment for drinks at the lounge.

"It looks like that was what it is," said Homicide Detective Steve Roadruck. "But it could run much deeper than that. With a guy like Morales and his checkered past, it could be anything."

Indeed, Morales, 42, has made and betrayed friends in several countries for dec-

on bar fight

ades. An admitted murderer, he has worked as an agent for several governments, a mercenary in the Belgian Congo, a bomb expert for Miami gamblers and an informant for the FBI, the CIA and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

His most recent role was key prosecution witness in the Tick-Talks drug-trafficking case, which fizzled when a Dade circuit judge ruled that Morales lacked the credibility to back up 1,000 hours of secret tapes he helped arrange.

When the shot was fired, dozens of patrons fled the secluded second-floor restaurant and Cherry's, the mirrored, modernistic, first-floor bar where the argument broke out. About a dozen witnesses remained by the time police arrived. They gave varying



Ricardo (Monkey) Morales Navarette: Shot in bar.

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accounts of what happened.

They said Morales and three friends were planning to leave shortly after arriving at the bar because several patrons objected to Morales being there. But as he was leaving, a quarrel started over the bar bill of the woman with Morales. Police identified her as Nancy Cid.

Witnesses said they heard no shouting before the shot was fired, but many were aware of the quarrel.

"It was a minor argument," said Lt. Harper. "It appeared to be a minor argument over the fact that the people that were in the restaurant didn't want Morales there. And then things got out of hand."

Although Morales had a handgun strapped to his ankle, investigators said he did not pull his weapon. Police arrived minutes after the shooting to find Morales sprawled on the floor, a bullet wound to the left rear of his head. The gunman had fled.

"It was very dark, dimly lit bar," said Metro Fire Rescue Lt. Allen Reynolds. "We had to have them put on the lights."

A blunt, sometimes belligerent man, Morales revealed many of his exploits from the witness stand during the Tick-Talks case earlier this year. The ruling that threw out the tapes — and a subsequent decision to drop charges — came only after Morales admitted complicity in several murders.

He said he had, for instance, helped supply explosives for the October 1976 mid-air destruction of a Cubana jet that killed 76 people.

Morales' past convinced some friends the shooting was not the result of a simple argument. Manuel Espinosa, a former Hialeah minister who has known Morales since 1965, said Morales may have prompted the shooting with his appearances on Channel 39's "En Una Hora," a local documentary news program.

On two recent Sundays in segments filmed about a year ago, Morales talked about the Cubana Airlines bombing, at one point promising to reveal who was behind the deadly plan.

Hours before he stopped at the Key Biscayne lounge, Morales spent several hours drinking at Centro Vasco, 2235 SW Eighth St., with Nelson Alba, director of the station that was showing the segments.

The two talked about future programs. Morales had three or four drinks and at one point pulled his pant leg up to show his gun in an ankle holster. "He has always been very sure of himself," Alba said.

Investigators said they are moving slowly and meticulously on the case and do not expect to make an arrest "for some time."

"We're not in any hurry," said Detective Roadruck. "We want to check every possibility out very carefully."

Among the persons police plan to question is the owner of the restaurant, Roger Novo, whom police say was at the establishment at the time of the shooting.

Said Roadruck: "We're definitely looking at him as well as others."

Roy Black, a lawyer for Novo, said his client was "in the vicinity" at the time of the shooting, but has denied involvement in the case.

"Mr. Novo says he is not guilty," said Black. "At the present time, Mr. Novo is saying he is not guilty of committing any crime."

The restaurant, meanwhile, reopened for business at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday.

The employees on duty at the time of the shooting were given the day off Tuesday. A spokesman for Rogers on the Green, located at 4000 Crandon Blvd., refused to discuss the incident.

"I don't want my business disrupted," said the manager, who refused to give her name.

Herald Staff Writers Jim McGee and Al Messerschmidt also contributed to this report.