

State agent didn't believe informant

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The Florida Department of Law Enforcement's top agent in South Florida testified Monday that before the Miami police undertook the narcotics probe that became known as Tick-Talks, his office was given a chance to run the operation — but refused because he believed informant Ricardo (Monkey) Morales was not reliable.

Rolando Bolanos, the FDLE's special agent in charge of South Florida operations, told Dade Circuit Judge Gerald Kogan that Metro-Dade police homicide Lt. Raul Diaz approached his office in November 1980 and suggested they use Morales as an informant for a wiretap investigation of the drug-smuggling ring allegedly headed by Carlos Quesada.

Diaz and Morales have known each other for 10 years. Defense attorneys for the 41 persons arrested in the Tick-Talks probe say Diaz actively tried to interest many South Florida law enforcement departments in using Morales as an informant. Diaz has denied the ac-

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FDLE agent Rolando Bolanos

cusation.

Morales' credibility is a key issue to the now eight-week-long motion to suppress some 1,000 hours of wiretap evidence collected in the Tick-Talks case. Defense attorneys are seeking to show that some agencies refused to deal with him because he was unreliable. They contend that taking him to the Miami Police Department and the Dade State Attorney's Office was a last resort.

Bolanos testified Monday that Diaz presented the operation to the FDLE as ready to go — not needing the three- to nine-month

process of exhausting other traditional investigative methods before filing a wiretap application with a judge. That "exhaustion" is critical under the law.

Bolanos, questioned by defense attorney William Cagney, said he and his squad discussed proceeding with the probe and with Morales — but too many objections were raised.

He said the primary objection was that it would tie up their limited resources for months.

But, he added: "The members of the squad brought it to my attention about his background. He is a controversial individual to work with."

The FDLE squad didn't believe Morales' story, Bolanos said. "These agents felt Mr. Morales would not meet the standards of a credible, reliable informant," he said.

Morales, 42, an ex-spy, admitted terrorist, bomber and assassin, has previously worked with the FBI, DEA, CIA and as head of counter-espionage for the Venezuelan secret police.