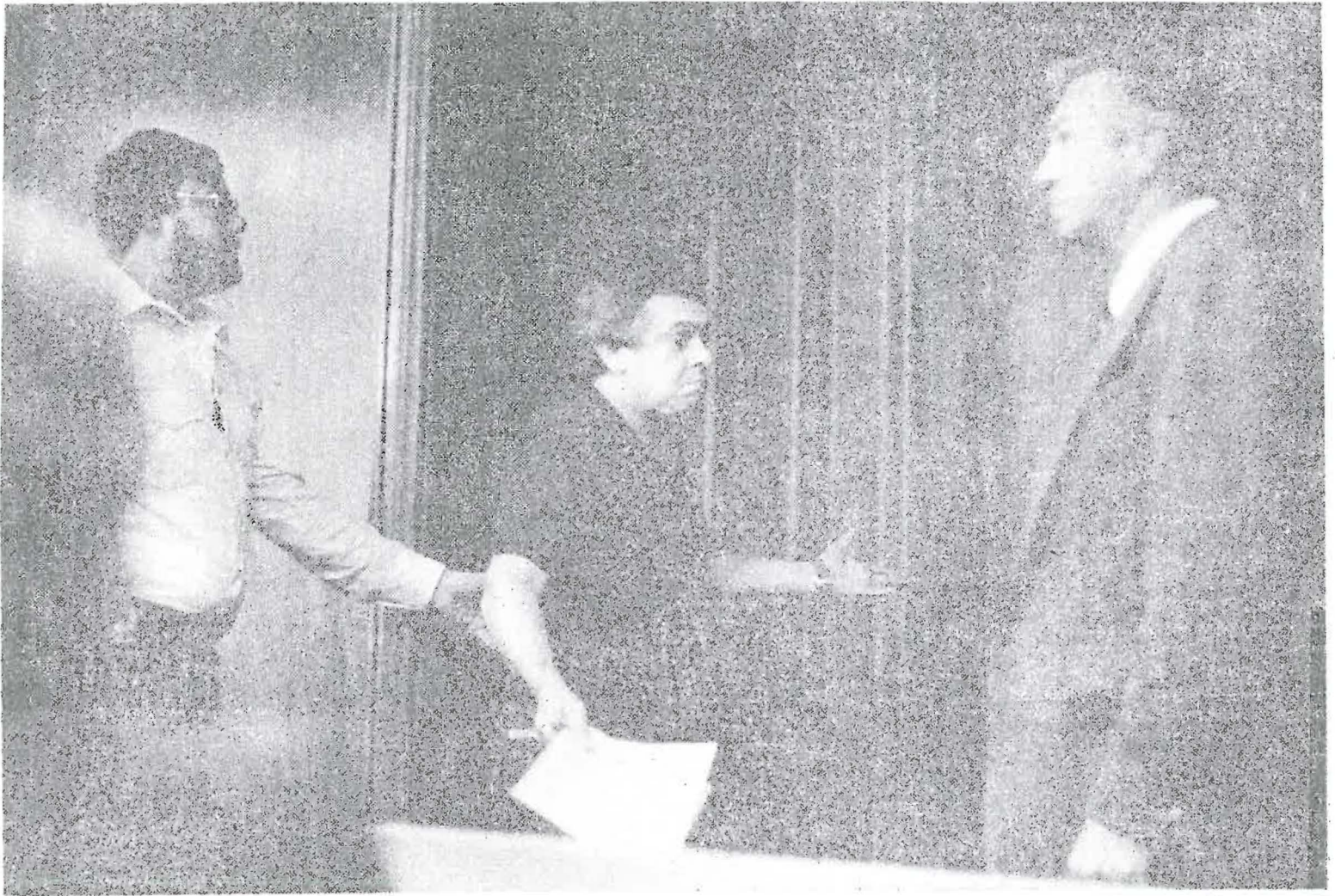


No questions for the state's star witness.



MURRY SILL / Miami Herald Staff

Ricardo (Monkey) Morales, center, shrugs as he winds up another day in court in which his only words from the stand were: "Thank you, your honor."

Monkey Morales speaks no evil

By JOHN KATZENBACH 5-20-82-1D
Herald Staff Writer

After eight weeks of testimony about the state's key Operation Tick-Talks witness, about his credibility, reliability, his crimes and his sworn allegations of high-level police corruption, Ricardo (Monkey) Morales Wednesday finally was put on the witness stand.

No one asked him any questions.

Neither prosecutors (who called him to the stand), nor judge, nor defense attorneys asked any questions. After less than 10 minutes, patiently awaiting the first query while it was determined that there would be no questioning, Morales was excused. As he walked from the courtroom he turned to the defendants, the press and a variety of other spectators and offered an exaggerated shrug.

Throughout the effort by defense attorneys to suppress the evidence in the Tick-Talks case, hardly a minute has passed in Dade Circuit Judge Gerald Kogan's court

without the name of Ricardo Morales being spoken. Morales' appearance to testify about his crimes and his corruption allegations has been eagerly — and anxiously — anticipated.

Morales, a onetime CIA operative, admitted killer, terrorist bomber and occasional drug dealer would be brought into the courtroom under police escort, Judge Kogan announced. The courtroom would be searched. All spectators would be frisked.

Defense attorney Doug Williams, who has hammered at Morales' credibility for weeks, asked for still more precautions. "Your honor," he said. "I think Mr. Morales himself should be searched."

Kogan smiled and denied the request.

Morales, 42, is the informant whose word led Miami police into the wiretaps which produced some 1,000 hours of conversations about alleged narcotics transactions and resulted in the arrests of more than 50 persons. He is the essential state's witness in the huge

Tick-Talks case.

For the past eight weeks Kogan has been hearing the efforts by defense lawyers to suppress the wiretap evidence. They have claimed that Morales was an unreliable informant — and a worse criminal than any of the people swept up in the Tick-Talks arrests in August 1981.

Dade prosecutors have differed. They have insisted that Morales passed lie-detector tests. They have said he turned on his associates in the narcotics trade because of a shift in the smuggling enterprise from cocaine and marijuana to heroin, which offended his sense of morality.

Consequently, Morales has been more on trial in the suppression hearing than any of the 32 remaining defendants. A sense of expectation accompanied his entrance into the courtroom.

He warmly greeted defendants Frank Cas-

Please turn to MORALES / 14D

Key Tick-Talks witness talks only 4 little words in court

MORALES / From 1D

tro, Jose Marcos and Juan B. Fernandez — the men whose freedom he has put in jeopardy. They spoke quickly in Spanish and then shared a loud laugh. There was no apparent animosity between accuser and accused.

Morales' hair is now gray, and he is thickening around the middle. He wore Calvin Klein jeans and a green pullover sweater. He smiled broadly at the lawyers, shook hands all around, greeted detectives, prosecutors and mugged for the cameramen.

There was nothing to remind anyone of Morales' past as a freelance bomber for warring gambling interests in Miami's 1957 bloody "Bookie Wars" or of his training as a CIA agent. He once was a mercenary soldier in the Congo and has worked with the FBI and DEA. For a time, he was chief of counter espionage for the Venezuelan secret police.

In the past weeks it has surfaced that Morales, in addition to admitting to numerous crimes beyond the statute of limitations, admitting a murder he cannot be prosecuted for (because of the speedy trial rule), and admitting complicity in the 1976 bombing of Cubana Airlines jetliner that killed 73, has also alleged widespread top-level corruption in the Miami and Metro police departments. What would he say, in public, on the witness stand?

He readily raised his hand and swore to tell the truth.

And then the expected didn't materialize.

"As far as the state is concerned," said Assistant State Attorney Rina Cohan, "the matters of Mr. Morales' past are not legally relevant. The state's position is that he is credible.

"By calling him to the stand, we are, in effect, vouching for his cred-



Judge Gerald Kogan: No questions.

ibility. We have no questions," she said.

She then suggested Judge Kogan and the defense fire away.

"The court has no questions," Kogan said. "So why do we need Mr. Morales?"

A good question indeed. No one answered.

"Well," the judge continued, "the state has no questions. The court has no questions. The defense has no questions. Therefore, Mr. Morales is excused."

Morales uttered the only words he would speak on the witness stand: "Thank you, your honor."

He rose and exited. Court was recessed for the day. In all, less than 10 minutes devoted to the man who has been, in effect, the subject of

close to eight weeks of testimony in one of Dade's pre-trial hearings.

After the session, Cohan said, "It is our position that we consider the question of Mr. Morales' credibility to be legally irrelevant. We volunteered to produce Mr. Morales for the defense. They've been saying all these things about him. But they declined to question him. By calling him, we are vouching for his credibility. That's basic legal theory.

"There's nothing I can add," she said because the case is pending.

Defense attorneys Williams, Kirk Munroe, Benedict Kuehne and William Cagney en masse suggested that prosecutors went through the "charade" and "low theater" in "an effort to avoid embarrassment" because of what Morales would admit to on the stand.

They said they were legally precluded from cross-examining Morales when prosecutors asked no questions. The issue of which side called Morales to the stand is critical. The side calling him can ask only neutral questions — not aggressive efforts to make him contradict himself.

"It clearly indicated a lack of credibility on the part of the prosecutors. If she (Cohan) were prepared to vouch for his credibility, she would have asked questions," they said.

The Tick-Talks hearing is now expected to come to a swift conclusion. But a final ruling by Judge Kogan on the complicated legal issues that swirl around Morales and the 1,000 hours of wiretaps, is not expected for weeks.