

BALTIMORE
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Anti-Castro terrorist group active and quite elusive

New York Times

NEW YORK—Over the last five months an anti-Castro group that the Federal Bureau of Investigation regards as the most dangerous terrorist organization in the United States has claimed responsibility for a series of bombings that have taken on global political implications.

The United States government has placed "highest priority" on seizing members of the group, called Omega 7, but so far not one of its members has been arrested as a bomber.

The FBI says the organization probably has no more than seven members and that penetrating it has raised unusually difficult problems.

"I need proof, I need documents, I need phone calls," said Larry W. Wack, an agent who has worked on the case.

In a mimeographed sheet, Omega 7, which is based in Union City, N.J., declared:

Violence Against Violence
Violence Against Hypocrisy
Violence for Dignity and Liberty

The handout was given to a Spanish-language newspaper just three weeks after the group had claimed responsibility for a bomb that exploded at Kennedy International Airport in luggage about to be loaded on a Trans World Airlines flight carrying 155 passengers and crew members to Los Angeles.

In recent months, Omega 7 has taken responsibility for bombing the Soviet Mission to the United Nations once and the Cuban Mission twice and the Fifth Avenue offices of Aeroflot, the Soviet airline.

Eulalio Jose Negrin, a Cuban exile leader who had been organizing trips to Havana, was shot to death on Nov. 25 outside his office in Union City. Omega 7, calling him a "traitor," said it was responsible for the assassination.

"We shall continue our actions anywhere in the world as long as there are

commercial enterprises and traitors that support our enemies, allowing them to obtain great quantities of dollars through commerce," the handout said. "We shall continue to struggle in foreign lands until we reach the 'Omega' stage to complete plans of bringing the struggle to Cuban soil." Omega is the last letter in the Greek alphabet.

It has been nearly 19 years since the failure of the American-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, but a small group of right-wing Cuban emigres clings tenaciously to the belief that President Fidel Castro and his Communist government can be ousted from Cuba by violent means. Until that final stage arrives, the group's members say, they will fight the battle on American soil, attacking Castro's spies and economic collaborators.

"There is still a little flame here in the United States showing the people over there in Cuba we still think of them; we still think of combat," said Alvin Ross-Diaz, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs and a jailed member of the Cuban Nationalist Movement. The FBI believes his group has provided the membership pool over the years for a myriad of anti-Castro terrorist groups, including Omega 7.

Following the bombing of the Soviet

Mission last December, which shattered windows as high as 18 stories above the residential block on the East Side, Donald F. McHenry, the United States representative at the United Nations, said after consultation with the FBI that apprehending Omega 7 members had been given "the highest priority."

That month he appointed a new deputy, H. Carl McCall, charged specifically with America's responsibilities as host country in protecting other missions. At a time when the United States is asking other nations for increased protection of its own embassies abroad, the Omega 7 bombings suddenly have global political implications.

The FBI has been able to make only a few minor arrests connected to the group in the metropolitan region. Agents say it not only is extremely difficult to penetrate, but placing informants on the witness stand also puts them in grave danger and destroys their future usefulness. They say that hard proof is needed while bomb explosions consume nearly all evidence, and that the victims have been uncooperative.

Although Omega 7 views itself as a patriotic organization representing the feelings of the Cuban exile community, the FBI says its members are hoodlums who extort money from law-abiding Cuban businesses for "the cause."

"They are hoods who use 'Castro out of Cuba' as an excuse for their criminal activities," said Tom Locke, a member of the FBI's New York antiterrorist unit. "They were never in Cuba. They can extort money, go about their daily routine, and be big shots in their community by virtue of violence."

Rudy Garcia, the executive editor of El Diario-La Prensa, the Spanish language newspaper, called Omega 7 members "pipsqueak commandos" in a vitriolic editorial in January and asked the intimidated Cuban-American community to help the FBI in exposing them. Omega 7 had bombed the newspaper office, which is situated in Manhattan at 181 Hudson Street, in October 1978. And just before the editorial appeared, the group threatened Garcia's life and that of one of his reporters.

"To turn our streets into battlegrounds, to endanger the life of innocent citizens, to attempt to shut the voice of the press through threats and bombs is at the very least ungrateful," Garcia said, "and at the most a travesty of their alleged reasons for being here—to secure the benefits of freedom and democracy. It is surely a poor way for a guest to treat a host."

"The place to get rid of Castro is Cuba, not Manhattan's East Side."

Since Omega 7 first proclaimed itself

after a February 1975 bombing, the group has taken responsibility for 19 bombings in the New York area. But the FBI called the TWA bombing last March 25 "a marked departure" from its previous activity because it showed the group was willing to injure innocent people.