

Wife's love may be behind Morales' cause

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Suspected FALN terrorist William Morales never lived in Puerto Rico and he may have been initially drawn into the violent fight for the island's independence by his love for a woman, according to authorities.

FBI spokesman Dick Gonzalez in San Juan described Morales, 33, as an intelligent and low-key person, who had an unremarkable if not normal upbringing in the South Bronx and Spanish Harlem.

Though his mother is from Catano, Gonzalez and a New York City explosion squad detective both said that there is no record of Morales ever having lived in or visited Puerto Rico.

Morales affiliation with the independence movement appears to coincide with a romantic involvement with Dylcia Pagan, a Puerto Rican independentista, who became Morales' wife and is now serving a prison term for FALN activities.

She was a film producer who made several documentaries. At least one, about Puerto Rico, was shown by the Public Broadcasting System. Morales freelanced as a photographer and frequently worked with his wife on her projects. As the romance grew, so did his enthusiasm for the movement, the detective said.

The detective said that many of those who have been associated with FALN have been linked to other activist groups, including the Macheteros, and that about half of the FALN members have never lived in Puerto Rico.

"We don't know how they've developed such an allegiance to Puerto Rico when they haven't even lived there," he said. "Most of their families we've seen have been non-activitists."

Morales was embittered by the poverty of his family and that of other Puerto Ricans living in in the Bronx, the detective speculated. He added that it was Morales' love for Dylcia Pagan that probably fired the discontent into action.



DYLCIA PAGAN (1979 file photo)

UPI photo

The detective said that he has been tracking Morales for eight years, talking to his friends, his teachers and his family and psychiatrists to learn about him.

"It came as a shock to find out he was the one making bombs because there were other people we were watching at the time," the detective added.

Morales was captured unharmed May 26 in Mexico following a shootout with police in Puebla that left a companion dead, ending a four-year international manhunt. He now faces murder charges for the death of a Mexican policeman, which could delay U.S. attempts to extradite him.

Morales was once an airline clerk who was fired for poor attendance, the detective said. He then fell back on his hobby — photography — to make a living. This was a bond he shared in the mid-seventies with the woman who would become his wife and who would draw him inextricably into the Puerto Rican liberation movement.

FBI agent Gonzalez said that Morales graduated from Morris High School in the Bronx and the detective said that he also had attendance problems there. One of the teachers "took him under his wing and saw him through graduation."

New York chaplain Amy Cortese, who was Morales' Sunday school teacher, said in a telephone conversation that he was a quiet teenager, who attracted very little attention.

"He was very quiet but a deep thinker," she said of Morales. "He never gave me any trouble and was never rowdy. He's the kind of guy you would have never picked out in a crowd."

She said it was more peer pressure than religious fervor that drew him to the South Bronx church. "His friends were going so he went along."

Police began following his activities around 1975-76 when he began appearing at Puerto Rican independence activities in New York. Authorities did not believe he was so actively and militantly involved until the 1978 Queens bomb factory explosion, where he lost both his hands.