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Colombia arrests Cuban suspected of links to rebels

BY GONZALO GUILLEN
El Nuevo Herald

BOGOTA, Colombia -- Colombian authorities arrested a Cuban national who had been part of the Peruvian Shining Path guerrillas, escaped from a Peruvian jail in 1995 and later joined a Colombian rebel group as an explosives instructor.

The 33-year-old man was identified by police as Miguel Mariano Ramos Rodríguez, according to a Peruvian foreigner's identification found on him.

Ramos was arrested Saturday on a bus in Uramita, department of Antioquia. He was in civilian clothes and unarmed, police Col. Guillermo Aranda Leal said. Police said Ramos was an instructor with Fronts 5 and 34 of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Ramos denied being a FARC member and did not resist arrest, a police source said.

Peruvian police believe that the arrested man could be N. Rodríguez Ramos, a member of Shining Path who was captured in 1994 and escaped from prison the following year, Antioquia police said.

According to Peruvian authorities, Ramos was born in the Cuban province of Holguín.

The suspected rebel is being accused of terrorism and rebellion, and held in Medellín.

Colombian authorities said they will ask Cuba for information on Ramos.

The alleged links of Ramos with Shining Path and the

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FARC raise concerns about Cuban President Fidel Castro's involvement – which has been considered non-existent or fading – with Latin American guerrilla groups.

Castro has repeatedly urged Colombian rebels to engage in political talks toward a peaceful solution of the South American nation's conflict, and the Cuban government is part of an international commission trying to mediate between Colombian President Andrés Pastrana and the rebels.

The presence of Cubans among the Colombian guerrillas is now rare, Bogotá police sources said.

Colombia has twice severed diplomatic relations with Cuba because of alleged ties between the Cuban government and Colombian rebels, who received arms and instructors from Cuba in the 1960s, '70s and part of the '80s.



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An overview of the Cuban government's involvement in state-sponsored terrorism.

Patterns of Global Terrorism: Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism

Cuba - 2000

Cuba continued to provide safehaven to several terrorists and US fugitives in 2000. A number of Basque ETA terrorists who gained sanctuary in Cuba some years ago continued to live on the island, as did several US terrorist fugitives.

Havana also maintained ties to other state sponsors of terrorism and Latin American insurgents. Colombia's two largest terrorist organizations, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army, both maintained a permanent presence on the island.

1999; 1998; 1997; 1996

Source: US Department of State; Office of Counterterrorism

Terrorism Experts Opine on Cuban Involvement

"Even those countries on the State Department's list may not be current sponsors of international terrorism - Syria, **Cuba**, North Korea and the Sudan - nevertheless play a critical role in abetting and facilitating terrorist operations. Without their provisions of training facilities, sanctuary, safe havens and other 'passive' forms of support, many groups would find it far more difficult to continue to operate."

-Bruce Hoffman. 1998. Inside Terrorism. London: Victor Gollancz. pgs. 194-195.

"Gone are the days when these countries were among the foremost players in this field, though **Cuba** continues to offer safe haven to former terrorists from Latin America who are on the wanted list. In its heyday, Castro's **Cuba** supported virtually all Latin American extremist movements irrespective of whether they engaged in guerrilla warfare or terrorism or a mixture of the two."

-Walter Laqueur. 1999. The New Terrorism. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 181.

"Multinational terrorism reached a first climax in the early 1970s. It involved close co-operation between small terrorist groups in many countries with the Libyans, Algerians, Syrians, North Koreans and **Cubans** acting as the paymasters and suppliers of weapons and equipment."

-Walter Laqueur. 1987. The Age of Terrorism. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. p. 268.

In The News

Glenholmes 'was IRA Cuban envoy' The Sunday Times: Ireland (August 26, 2001)

THE republican movement had a Latin American representative from 1990 to 1995, according to security sources. Eibhlín (Evelyn) Glenholmes, 43, once the most wanted woman in Britain, was the Havana-based envoy to Latin America until she was succeeded by Niall Connolly, currently facing charges in Colombia.

El Departamento América cubano ABC | Opinion (Agosto 17, 2001)

Alberto PÉREZ GIMÉNEZ

Hubo un tiempo en el que todos los caminos del terrorismo internacional llevaban a Cuba. En el organigrama del régimen cubano había, con nombre y apellidos, un «ministerio» dedicado a la exportación de la guerrilla a cualquier parte del mundo. Era el Departamento América.

Al frente de él puso Fidel Castro a Manuel Piñeiro «Barbarroja». Durante

décadas, allí tuvieron cobijo todos los miembros de las guerrillas iberoamericanas. Jorge Massetti, hijo del argentino fundador de la Agencia de Noticias Prensa Latina que desapareció en la selva de Salta en Argentina cuando pretendía montar una guerrilla, cuenta en su libro «El Furor y el Delirio» cómo funcionaba el Departamento América. Él mismo, apadrinado por «Barbarroja», fue uno de los «alumnos aventajados» del Departamento: peleó en Nicaragua, en Panamá, en Chile. Atracó Bancos en EE.UU. en operaciones coordinadas desde la Embajada de Cuba en México.

En Cuba se entrenaba a los guerrilleros en los PETI (Puntos de Entrenamiento de Tropas Irregulares). Por allí anduvieron los macheteros de Puerto Rico; los M-16 y el Frente Patriótico chileno; los montoneros; los «elenos» colombianos, etarras y hasta, en 1982, un mexicano muy interesado en conocer toda la vida del Che, cómo fumaba su pipa, qué leía... Era el «subcomandante Marcos».

Cuando al secretario general de la OEA, César Gaviria, le secuestró la guerrilla a su hermano, supo exactamente con quién tenía que negociar: logró la libertad de su familiar y un avión para que el comando que le secuestró huyera a Cuba.

Manuel Piñeiro «Barbarroja» murió hace unos años en un extraño accidente cuando conducía su automóvil, algo que, según Massetti, odiaba. Castro proclamó a los cuatro vientos que la lucha guerrillera ya no tenía sentido.

Sin embargo, los hechos parecen decir lo contrario. En Cuba siguen viviendo, a cuerpo de rey, según muchos testigos, una nutrida colonia de etarras. En la zona «desmilitarizada» de Colombia bajo control de las FARC hay, según la Prensa colombiana, por lo menos 20 instructores cubanos enseñando a los «guerrilleros» a pilotar helicópteros. Uno de los tres miembros del IRA detenidos el sábado tras pasar cinco semanas asesorando a las FARC es, según «The Guardian», el «hombre de Sinn Fein en La Habana» y encargado de preparar la visita de Gerry Adams a la isla y su encuentro con Fidel Castro. Al parecer, son muchos los caminos que siguen llevando a Cuba.

[Cuba link to Colombia IRA suspect](#) BBC (August 17, 2001)

One of three suspected IRA men arrested in Colombia has lived in Havana representing the group's political wing, the Cuban Government says.

According to the foreign ministry, Niall Connolly was the legal representative for Sinn Fein in Latin America and had lived in Cuba for the past five years.

But Sinn Fein in Belfast has denied any knowledge of the man, or the other two detained with him - James Monaghan and Martin McCauley.

A foreign ministry spokeswoman said that, as far as they were concerned, Sinn Fein was a legal political party in both Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland and that Mr Connolly was its legal representative.

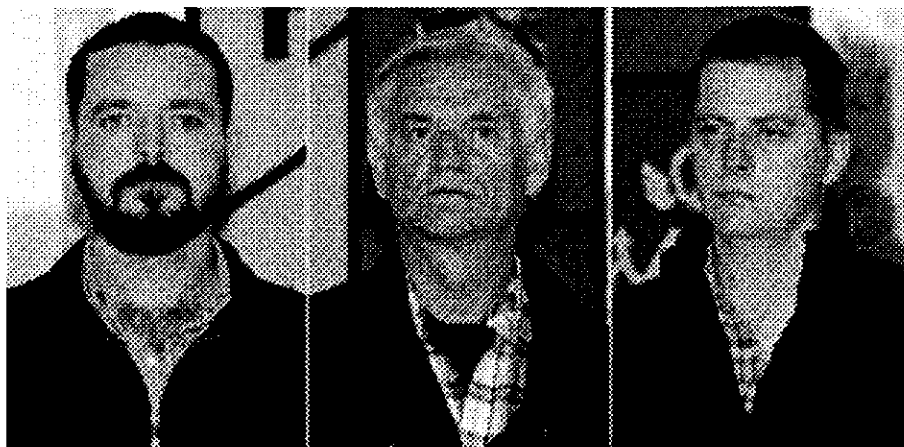
She would give no further details, but said there was no connection between any work he did in Cuba and anything he may be suspected of doing in Colombia.

Colombian rebels

The three men were picked up on Saturday in the Colombian capital, Bogota, after stepping off a flight from an area controlled by the country's largest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as Farc. No formal charges have yet been filed against them.

All three have denied links with the Provisional IRA or Colombian guerrillas.

Arrested IRA man 'is Sinn Fein Cuba link' The Times (UK) (August 16, 2001)



Niall Connolly

Edward Joseph Campbell

John Joseph Kelly

One of the three IRA men arrested in Colombia at the weekend was allegedly Sinn Fein's link with Cuba. Niall Connolly is suspected of involvement in arranging Gerry Adams's trip to the Caribbean island next month. Connolly, a former teacher from Dublin who travelled under the name David Bracken, had been the republican movement's contact in Cuba since 1996, according to security sources in Belfast. They said that the IRA "envoy" was believed to be part of a team helping to organise Mr Adams's eight-day trip to the island as head of a Sinn Fein delegation.

Xaki encargó a Mikel Corta Carrión "Hiru" viajar a Cuba Europa Press (Agosto 7, 2000)

El aparato internacional de ETA, conocido como Xaki, tenía previsto enviar a Mikel Gotzón Corta Carrión, alias "Hiru", a Cuba para entrevistarse como integrantes del Partido Comunista Cubano y "aclarar dudas" para potenciar la solidaridad entre ambos. Así lo explica el juez de la Audiencia Nacional.

Baltasar Garzón en el auto en el que acuerda el procesamiento de 16 personas por su presunta vinculación con el entramado internacional de la banda terrorista ETA. En este auto, el magistrado también acuerda el procesamiento de "Hiru", que entre los años 1998 y 1999 fue el responsable de Xaki para América Latina y que ahora se encuentra en libertad bajo fianza. El objetivo que perseguía el aparato internacional de ETA era, según el auto de Garzón, potenciar "la solidaridad" en "áreas diplomáticas" con Cuba.

ETA escribió a Castro durante la tregua para pedirle una reunión en Europa
La Verdad (Agosto 7, 2000)

La banda terrorista ETA escribió a Fidel Castro durante la tregua para solicitarle una reunión en Europa con representantes del Partido Comunista cubano. El texto de la carta fue descubierto por la Policía francesa en un disquete intervenido en poder de Jokin Etxebarria Lagisket, brazo derecho de Mikel Antza, cuando fue detenido en Tarbes el 1 de agosto de 1999. Se desconoce si el documento, fechado dos días más tarde, llegó a ser transmitido a su destinatario. La carta, redactada en español, estaba dirigida a Castro en persona. La petición de entrevista entre una delegación de ETA y una representación del régimen de La Habana tenía la finalidad de abordar la situación de los pueblos vasco y cubano en el contexto internacional, según fuentes francesas.

U.S. Seeks Terror Advice From Cuba Associated Press (June 19, 2000)
Senators wanted to know from the expert on international terrorism if any of the seven countries the United States accuses of exporting terror had improved its record. The answer: Cuba.

FARC and ELN leaders reunite in Cuba InformativosNet (June 14, 2000)

The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) had been united during 1988 when the Insurgency Coordinator was created to negotiate with the government and other guerrilla groups during conversations in Tlaxcala and Caracas. Raúl Reyes, spokesman of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Antonio García, military chief of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) held a reunion in Cuba on Tuesday. The encounter of the Colombian guerrilla leaders has not taken place for more than ten years.

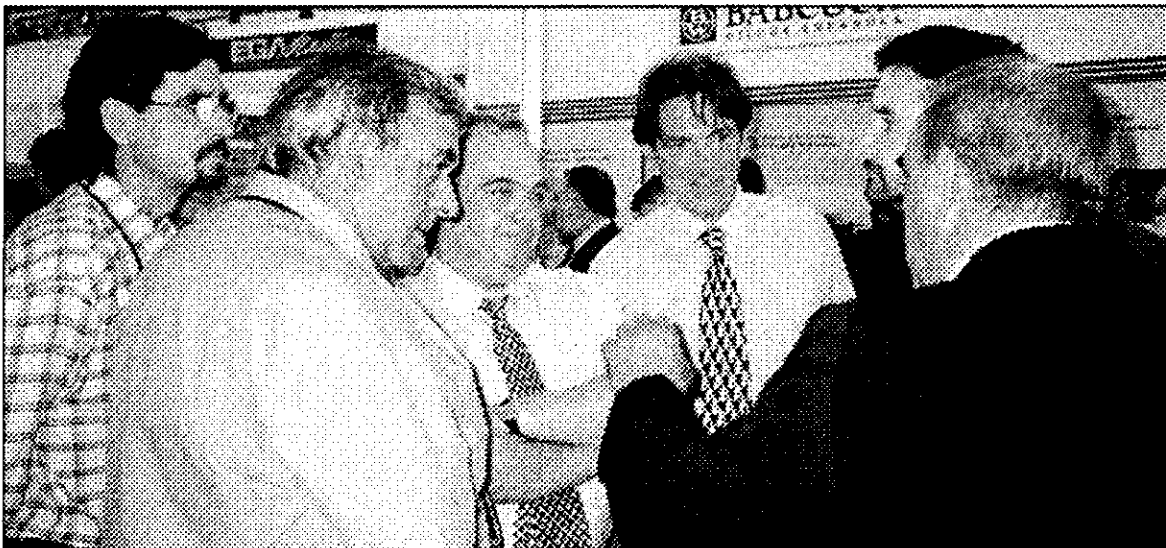
Colombian guerrilla chief in Havana AP (June 13, 2000)

Havana - Commander Raúl Reyes, member of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) Secretariat, arrived last night for a series of discussions about the peace process between the guerrillas and the government of President

Andrés Pastrana.

Report: Basque Separatists Seeking Refuge in Cuba Reuters (May 21, 2000)

MADRID (Reuters) - Spanish authorities believe the armed Basque separatist group ETA is taking refuge in Cuba now that a French crackdown has weakened their operations in France, the Spanish newspaper Diario 16 reported Sunday.



Josu Jon Imaz, spokesman of the Basque government is photographed with ETA members in Cuba . El Mundo . (October 1999)

El portavoz del Gobierno vasco estuvo en Cuba con dos etarras en octubre de 1999 El Mundo (Feb. 28, 2000)

El portavoz del Gobierno vasco, el nacionalista Josu Jon Imaz, estuvo con dos históricos etarras en Cuba el pasado mes de octubre, según ha podido saber EL MUNDO. Uno de estos etarras, José Angel Urtiaga Martínez, está reclamado por la Justicia por su implicación en diversos atentados.

ETA's bloody record BBC News (December 2, 1999)

For the last three decades the armed organisation ETA has waged a bloody campaign for independence for the seven regions in northern Spain and southwestern France that Basque separatists claim as their own.

Recent articles on Cuban Terrorism and Its Potential

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