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Fidel May Be Part of Terror Campaign

By Martin Arostegui

At 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 14, Ana Belen Montes, a senior analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), walked into a public telephone booth outside Washington's National Zoo and made two calls to pager numbers later traced by federal agents to Cuba's Directorate of General Intelligence (DGI). She already had compromised the identities of CIA agents, revealed U.S. military secrets and exposed the contents of classified files. But, as Montes sent repeated signals to her DGI handlers during the days immediately following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the FBI was given orders to act.

The Sept. 21 arrest of a Fidel Castro mole deeply burrowed into the U.S. defense establishment at such a moment — even as weapons-grade anthrax was being mailed to media and congressional targets — raises serious questions about a possible Cuban connection with the international terrorist conspiracy targeting the United States. Concerns about Cuba's continuing threat to U.S. national security were voiced recently by the DIA director, Vice Adm. Tom Wilson. Before entering a closed session of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence he told reporters that "Cuba could initiate information warfare or computer-network attacks that could seriously disrupt our military."

While there has been a tendency to play down Castro's capabilities to engage the United States in asymmetrical warfare, "they are getting renewed attention in the light of recent events," according to a Pentagon source. The source tells Insight that only a highly sophisticated espionage network, such as the one operating from Cuba, could have cracked the code of Air Force One in an apparent breach of security that caused U.S. Secret Service officials to whisk the president out of sight on the morning of Sept. 11.

A sudden decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin to shut down Russia's electronic listening station at Lourdes near Havana by next year, announced just hours before his meeting with President George W. Bush at the Oct. 19 economic summit in Shanghai, "reflects the degree of alarm over Cuba's intelligence operations," according to a U.S. defense analyst in Washington. Congress already was threatening to freeze financial aid to Moscow unless it dismantled the intelligence facility that gives Castro a degree of international leverage out of proportion to the bankrupt state of his communist regime.

Despite some residual support for Castro in the Kremlin, a Cuban delegation visiting Moscow to procure additional funding for the Lourdes facility abruptly was dismissed with the announcement

ability to use asymmetric tactics against our military is significant."

In August 2001, two Cuban spies in Orlando, Florida were arrested. According to the FBI, one Cuban spy who worked for the U.S. Postal Service at Miami International Airport sent two detailed reports to Havana in 1998 about the U.S. postal system (one is entitled to ask in this era of lethal letters why Mr. Castro wanted to know all about the functioning of the U.S. postal system). On Sept. 21, a senior analyst at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency was arrested for spying for the Cuban regime. The FBI was forced to arrest her before concluding its investigation because, according to intelligence community sources, Mr. Castro is known to share intelligence with Middle Eastern enemies of the United States.

While some other "terrorist list states" have begun to provide intelligence to the United States, the Cuban dictatorship remains closely linked to and serves as the private-international banker for multiple terrorist organizations. As various lists of cooperating countries in the fight against money laundering become publicly known, the role of international terrorism's banker will become increasingly harder to hide.

Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart is a Republican from Florida.

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