

## Area Cubans Relieved By Charges In Spy Case

Arrest Proves Castro Is a Threat, Groups Say

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Cuban American groups yesterday applauded the arrest of a top-level Defense Intelligence Agency analyst on charges of spying for Cuba, asserting that her alleged actions could help terrorists and bring further harm to the United States.

"Cuba, in my analysis, shares that information and uses it to ingratiate itself and prove its utility to other enemies of the United States," said Jose Cardenas, executive director of the Washington office of the Cuban American National Foundation, a lobbying group for Cuban exiles.

"In light of the current situation that the country finds itself in, it's one more clarion call," Cardenas added, citing Cuban President Fidel Castro's ties with Libya, Iraq, Syria and other nations deemed antagonistic toward the United States.

Ana Belen Montes, 44, of Northwest Washington, was arrested Friday morning at her office at Bolling Air Force Base on charges of conspiracy to deliver U.S. national defense information, a crime punishable by death. The DIA senior analyst is being held without bond pending a hearing Wednesday.

Prosecutors have accused Montes of working for Cuba's intelligence service and providing classified information to Cuba about U.S. military exercises and other sensitive operations.

"I commend the federal authorities for stepping in now and arresting that spy at this very delicate moment when the U.S. is embarking on a worldwide terrorist campaign," Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) said yesterday. "She had access to extraordinarily, highly classified information, and not just about Cuba."

Montes began working at the DIA in 1985. Seven years later, she was assigned to analyze Cuban matters. As the agency's senior analyst for Cuba, she would have had dealings with Cuba watchers in the intelligence community, including the CIA and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

"It's a very serious case," said a federal official familiar with the arrest. "She had access to a great deal of classified information."

Montes is one of more than a dozen people arrested in the United States since September 1998 on charges of spying for Cuba. Most of the other arrests were made by the FBI in Florida and were of suspects connected to a spy ring dubbed the Wasp Network, which attempted to infiltrate Cuban exile organizations and U.S. military installations.

The arrest complaint against Montes did not directly link her to the ring, but it did allege that she communicated with her Cuban handlers via shortwave radios, computer diskettes and pagers -- methods used by the Wasp Network.

One law enforcement source said investigators believe that Montes started spying in 1996. She had been under surveillance by the FBI for several months.

The head of the Center for a Free Cuba in Washington said that her arrest validates the concerns of

the exile community and some elected officials about Cuban espionage operations in the United States.

"When members of Congress raise this issue, the response from some policy quarters is that Castro is not a threat and that the only thing they're spying on is the exile community," Frank Calzon said. "Now we have a case in which a fairly important intelligence officer has been grabbed and who allegedly has been working for the Cuban government."

Montes, a U.S. citizen who was born on a military installation in Germany, is a graduate of the University of Virginia and the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She lived alone in a cooperative apartment building in the 3000 block of Macomb Street NW.

In May, according to an FBI affidavit, agents obtained court approval to enter her apartment, where they found a shortwave radio, an earpiece and a laptop computer. Agents copied the computer's hard drive and restored what had been deleted. They also followed Montes as she made calls on pay phones outside the National Zoo and at other locations in the city and in Maryland, sending encrypted messages to pagers, according to the affidavit.

Montes' neighbors said that she was in frequent e-mail contact with them, complaining about a special co-op assessment and a mysterious intrusion.

"She was very vocal about [the assessment] and very agitated about it," said Geoff Henry, a co-op board member who said she e-mailed him nearly once a day on various matters. He said Montes worked with other residents to get the assessment rescinded.

In the spring, he said, after finding the door to her apartment unlocked, she sent e-mails to the entire co-op board, asking them if anyone had entered her home without her knowledge.

Henry said that Montes had lived in the building for about 10 years and had served on the board previously. She told other residents that she was going to run for the board again this fall because she was upset about the building's management. More recently, she was working with him to improve delivery of packages to the building, which did not have a doorman. She said she could not receive personal packages at her office.

Henry said a board member asked her why and Montes replied, in an e-mail, that she worked for the Defense Department.

Montes thought that a recent renovation to the 27-unit building "was an extravagance," Henry said. When he countered that the improvements would add value to individual apartments, "She said it didn't matter. She was planning on being here for the long haul."

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