

## **Defense Analyst Accused of Spying for Cuba**

Woman Passed Classified Information on Military Exercises, FBI Says

By Bill Miller and Walter Pincus  
Washington Post Staff Writers  
Saturday, September 22, 2001; Page A01

The Defense Intelligence Agency's senior analyst for matters involving Cuba was arrested at her office yesterday and accused of providing classified information about military exercises and other sensitive operations to the Cuban government.

Federal prosecutors said Ana Belen Montes, 44, of Northwest Washington, was working for the Cuban intelligence service while on the U.S. government payroll. The FBI, which had been tailing Montes for months, surprised her at work yesterday morning at Bolling Air Force Base and charged her with conspiracy to deliver U.S. national defense information to Cuba, a capital offense.

A few hours later, Montes sat silently in U.S. District Court as prosecutors said she "knowingly compromised national defense information" and harmed the United States. A magistrate judge ordered her jailed without bond pending a hearing Wednesday. He also put Montes on a suicide watch at the request of prosecutors.

"This is a clandestine agent for the Cuban intelligence service," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald L. Walutes Jr. "This has been going on for quite some time."

Established 40 years ago, the Defense Intelligence Agency today has more than 7,000 military and civilian employees around the world, with its headquarters at Bolling, in Washington. Its job is to produce military intelligence about foreign countries in support of U.S. planning and operations. One of the DIA's first successes was its role in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

Montes began work at the DIA in 1985 and was assigned to analyze Cuban matters seven years later. As the DIA's senior analyst for Cuba, Montes would have dealt regularly with Cuba watchers from other agencies in the U.S. intelligence community, most particularly from the CIA and the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau.

In a court affidavit, FBI agent Stephen A. McCoy said authorities determined that Montes was passing details "about a particular Special Access Program related to the national defense of the United States." An intelligence source said that probably referred to a highly classified intelligence collection system being employed to gather information either by satellite or other technical or human capability.

Another of her alleged disclosures, the affidavit said, was the identity of a U.S. intelligence officer "who was present in an undercover capacity, in Cuba." Although the Cubans apparently did not arrest the individual, the affidavit indicated that "the Cuban government was able to direct its counter-intelligence resources" against the officer.

At another time, the affidavit said, Montes informed the Cubans that "we have noticed" the location, number and type of certain Cuban military weapons in Cuba. She also allegedly shared information about a 1996 war games exercise.

"This has been a very important investigation, because it does show our national defense information is still being targeted by the Cuban intelligence service," said Van A. Harp, assistant director in charge of the FBI's Washington field office.

A senior intelligence official shared that assessment, saying, "It is very serious." He added that "it is still too early to say how much damage she may have done." The official pointed out, however, that any information received by Cuba then could have been shared with other foreign governments, causing further harm.

A DIA spokesman declined to comment. The agency cooperated in the FBI's investigation. An official at Cuba's diplomatic mission in Washington declined to discuss the case.

Montes, a U.S. citizen born at a U.S. military installation in Germany, is single and lived alone in an apartment in the 3000 block of Macomb Street NW, authorities said. The FBI searched her residence yesterday and also got a warrant to comb through her 2000 Toyota Echo, a safe-deposit box and her office.

Authorities declined to say what led them to focus on Montes or how they believed she became associated with the Cuban government. They said she communicated with her Cuban handlers via shortwave radios, computer diskettes and pagers, methods employed by a Cuban spy ring based in Florida -- known as the Wasp Network -- that attempted to infiltrate Cuban exile organizations and U.S. military installations.

Seven people have been convicted of being part of that organization, including a husband and wife who pleaded guilty yesterday. In charging documents and other court papers, authorities did not directly link Montes to the Florida activities. One law enforcement source said investigators believe Montes began spying in 1996.

According to the FBI's affidavit, the Cuban intelligence service often communicates with overseas agents by broadcasting encrypted messages at high frequencies via shortwave radio. The messages typically are conveyed in a series of numbers and transcribed into Spanish text by a computer program.

The FBI obtained court approval to surreptitiously enter Montes's apartment in May and found a shortwave radio and earpiece as well as a laptop computer, the affidavit said. Agents secretly copied the computer's hard drive and restored text that had been deleted, providing the foundation for many of the allegations, the document added.

Since May, agents have followed Montes as she made brief calls on pay telephones outside the National Zoo, gas stations and other locations in Northwest Washington and Maryland, apparently sending encrypted messages to pagers, the affidavit said. But the affidavit makes no mention of any occasions in which Montes was observed meeting with any suspected accomplices, making drop-offs or picking up money.

Before joining the DIA, Montes worked in the Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy in the early 1980s. She is a 1979 graduate of the University of Virginia and received a master's degree in 1988 from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Montes lived on the second floor of a three-story cooperative building in Cleveland Park. Neighbors said she had resided in the building at least seven or eight years and described her as friendly if quiet.

Neighbors said there was nothing unusual about Montes's habits, and they had no idea she had been arrested. The people they thought were Montes's visitors yesterday afternoon were actually FBI agents, who were observed eating pizza in her apartment.

One resident said he had been working with Montes on projects in the building, including improving the mailboxes. Another said Montes once was president of the co-op board. She was known to work

for the federal government, but neighbors said she never talked in detail about her job. After the attack on the Pentagon last week, a neighbor said, he sent her an e-mail and got an emotional response.

"Right now, I'm not in the mood to talk," she wrote back, saying she was distraught about the terrorists' assault.

Another neighbor, Gretchen Gusich, said Montes let her use her unit this week when Gusich's bathroom had plumbing problems, even leaving a key with her.

"She was a good neighbor," Gusich said.

*Staff writers David A. Fahrenthold and Martin Weil and Metro researcher Bobbye Pratt contributed to this report.*

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