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INTELLIGENCE REPORT
FROM WASHINGTON 23-092401
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September 24, 2001

HAS CUBA CHOSEN ITS SIDE IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM ?

The terrorist attack against Washington and New York sent US fighter planes scrambling into the air over the Strait of Florida as US Cuba watchers stayed glued to their intelligence agency desks. For several days Cuba was off the screen in Washington's official press releases and the media in general. However, experienced observers of Cuba sensed that something was going on in their area of interest. They were correct. In the morning hours of Friday September 21, the FBI announced that agents had arrested in her office at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) at Bolling Air Force Base the head of the Cuban Desk, Ana Belén Montes.

Montes, 44, was born at an air force base in Germany in 1957 of

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Puerto Rican parents. She graduated from the University of Virginia in 1979 and went to work sometime later for the Justice Department. In 1985, Montes started work at the Department of Defense. In 1988, she received a Masters Degree at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. From her position at the Cuba desk of the DIA, Montes was in a good spot to betray her country. From information currently available, it is not clear when she started to work for the Cuban DI (Directory of Intelligence), but one press report tied her descent into espionage to the purchase of a laptop computer in 1996. According to intelligence sources, the FBI has been carefully observing Montes since May of this year. She was seen contacting members of the Cuban Intelligence Services (DI) in the Washington metropolitan area, and reportedly making numerous calls from public phones to pager numbers.

With the media focused intently on the terrorist attacks and the anticipated first steps of retaliation, the Montes arrest has received little attention since the initial announcement. The timing of the arrest, however, has led many to believe that Washington intends to send a serious message to her handlers. It is known that Cuba has housed, facilitated travel and provided refuge to diverse terrorists for many years. There is no question that Havana is now aware that something is cooking in Washington, and that the President's comments about "terrorists and those regimes that support them" will be seen in the same viewfinder as the teams of hijackers who crashed planeloads of innocents on September 11.

As soon the media realize this connection, many questions will be asked. It is expected that by the middle of next week the press will ask what is going on with the Cuban spies in the USA. It is difficult to say at this time how much damage Montes, the spy, may have caused in real terms. However, in political and psychological terms her discovery and arrest has been a devastating blow for the Pentagon. Cuba has had an agent for many years within the defense machinery of the USA at its most sensitive point: the brain.

How will Washington react? It is impossible to say at this time. Fidel Castro went for the chest of the King and buried his knife in the body. How serious is the wound? Was he acting solely in the interests of Cuba, or was he gathering information for exchange with unsavory characters like Osama or Saddam Hussein, as many suspect? In the present mood of the United States, this question looms much larger than any issue in the bilateral relationship over the past 10 years. It may affect the course of events.

Montes did not act alone in this country. Who collaborated with her? Will Washington retaliate soon? Voices on Capitol Hill will ask for explanations and retribution. And the voices, at this time, will be heard - not to be drowned out by the usual "be nice to Castro" crowd. The injury is too large and important to be ignored. On the other hand, Castro's alliance with Iraq has now taken on a more dangerous character. During the Persian Gulf War in 1991, it is known that Cuban listening posts aimed at American territory provided intelligence to Saddam Hussein. Could this story repeat itself? All these questions have to be debated and answered in the coming week. The United States is at war and Cuba is a potential enemy in our back yard.

BACKGROUND ON ARREST OF CASTRO'S PENTAGON SPY
By Ernesto F. Betancourt

At a time when all US Government energies are supposed to be

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concentrated on finding bin Laden's terrorist links, it is most revealing that the FBI and the Justice Department decided to proceed with the arrest of Ana Belén Montes, the DIA Senior Analyst responsible for Cuban affairs. Usually, when our counterintelligence is monitoring a suspected foreign agent they follow the culprit but do not arrest them.

That way they can identify potential additional links. Why was this not done in this case? There are two possibilities: one, that she could leak to the Cubans relevant information on our intended response who in turn could pass it to bin Laden; the other, that there was a turf battle inside the Administration between the Bush Justice Department and left over elements from the Clinton Administration at the Pentagon on how to deal with Cuba.

The first is not easy to be discarded. Granted, Castro is unlikely to be chosen as an ally by bin Laden because he is a deeply religious Islamic fundamentalist who left a comfortable life as a millionaire in Saudi Arabia to combat Communism and the Soviets in Afghanistan, while Fidel Castro gave himself an atheistic and Marxist Constitution and was a Soviet surrogate. So, there are profound philosophical and ideological disagreements between the two. However, they share a profound hatred of the US.

Furthermore, there are many potential intermediaries in the Muslim world, including Iran, Iraq, Libya and the PLO, who are playing with both sides and could provide a bridge between the two. So, the possibility of a Cuban spy at the Pentagon being a danger to our immediate security in the war on terrorism does not have to be totally excluded as the reason for ending the observation phase in this case.

The other explanation goes back to September 14, 1998 when FBI Special Agent Raúl Fernández went to court in Miami to present an Affidavit in what turned out to be a most bizarre spy case, the Wasp Network. The main case against the Wasp Network was that its members--ten arrested and four absent--were spying on US military installations, as well as on the Cuban exile community in the Miami area. A most intriguing element mentioned by agent Fernández in his Affidavit, items 18 and 19, was that one of the spies, Antonio Guerrero, aka Lorient, had provided the Cubans with "the home addresses of hundreds of military personnel stationed at the base (Boca Chica Naval Air Station)". This information would be of little use for Cuban defensive purposes. However, it could be extremely useful in a commando raid against that installation. It so happens that the prestigious *Jane's Defense Weekly*, dated March 6, 1996, had reported that, since the early nineties, Cuba was training commandos in VietNam for precisely such an assignment. According to *Jane's* story, "Havana's strategy in pursuing such training is to attack the staging and supply areas for US forces preparing to invade Cuba. The political objective would be to bring the reality of warfare to the American public and so exert domestic pressure on Washington."

The spy trial indictment was changed in May 1999 by the Clinton administration, downplaying the military angle and focusing instead on Cuba's role in the downing of American civilian planes over international waters on February 24, 1996. The first was done to please Castro, who had claimed in a CNN interview that he never spied on US military installations, that his spying was limited to defend himself from the attacks of Miami Cubans. Clinton did not want to close the door to an agreement with Castro as one of his foreign policy successes. The second, to placate

the Cuban-American community for such a concession by raising a highly emotional issue for them. This was a compensation to boost the Gore candidacy among Cuban-American voters.

The trial itself was most irregular. The presiding Federal judge agreed to the defense request to ban the seating of any members of the Cuban-American community in the jury, which ended having five non-Cuban Hispanics, three Anglos, three African-Americans and one Asian- American. She also ordered the prosecution to obtain testimony in Cuba from Cuban intelligence and military officers, which was later presented to the jury by the defense. Can you imagine a Cuban intelligence officer being asked to swear over a Bible to say the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? They must still be laughing about that one. Since these were the officers who had ordered the spies to get involved in the conspiracy to down the civilian planes, they belonged in the bench of the accused, instead of as witnesses.

But, most incredible of all, two retired Generals, Charles Wilhem and Edward Atkeson, were witnesses for the defense. Stop here and read it over again: two American generals were trying to exonerate Castro's spies from spying against the US military. It is not hard to imagine the frustration of prosecutors and FBI agents, who monitored for three years the Wasp Network to gather the evidence presented to the jury, in the presence of this behavior by senior military officers. In particular that of General Wilhem, former head of the Southern Command, who testified on April 16, 2001 that he ignored the FBI warnings because the Cubans could not penetrate the security provisions in effect at his command. Somehow, the evidence gathered and presented by the FBI and the prosecution must have seemed more persuasive to the jury, because they ignored the bizarre testimony of these two generals to find the Wasp Network spies guilty of both charges: spying on the US military and conspiracy to commit murder in the case of the civilian planes downed on February 24, 1996.

To understand these two generals' bizarre behavior it is important to point out that during the Clinton Administration a naive theory was developed somewhere at the Pentagon think tanks, most likely the National Defense University, to the effect that the optimum transition in Cuba would be one controlled by the Castro brothers. This would satisfy three basic US national security objectives: i) avoid a mass migration; ii) avoid a civil war forcing a US intervention; and, iii) provide assurances of cooperation in drug interdiction. Of course, the fact that this did not take into account at all the possible expectations of the Cuban people, did not seem to matter to the think tankers. The same arrogant blindness that led us into the Bay of Pigs disaster seems to prevail in the thinking of these Pentagon analysts. Or, was it an idea planted by the senior DIA analyst?

In the implementation of this strategy, generals Wilhem and Atkeson visited Cuba and had long meetings with Castro, one lasted nine hours and the other five hours. General Atkeson went on to report on their Cuban activities in an article in the military journal ARMY, issue of May 15, 2001. Fidel was delighted and Raul said twice in public events, first in December, 2000 and again in January, 2001, that the wisest thing for the Bush administration was to come to terms with the Cuban revolution while Fidel was still alive. The generals' answer for the future of Cuba was to make Raul the Batista of the new century.

Another general involved in this exercise was McCaffrey, Clinton's Drug Czar. His angle was that we should cooperate with Castro in drug interdiction, one of the unfulfilled goals of his last year in the Clinton Administration. On August 28, 2001, a

coordinated event, or a strange coincidence, took place. On that day, Cuba's Justice Minister expressed their willingness to cooperate with the US in drug interdiction and General McCaffrey gave a speech at Georgetown University in which he told President Bush, in an incredibly arrogant tone, that his Administration should create a joint Caribbean drug interdiction command under a Coast Guard Admiral with, among others, Cuban participation and access to our intelligence and even equipment and financing.

This advice has to be considered in the light of the abysmal record of McCaffrey in the case of General Gutierrez Rebollo, whom he praised extensively upon his appointment as Mexican Drug Czar in 1997, to see the man arrested two weeks later for being on the payroll of Amado Carrillo Fuentes, the so-called King of the Skies. During the trial of Gutierrez Rebollo, now serving a sentence of 77 years in prison, it came out that he was turning over to the Amado Carrillo cartel the intelligence and equipment the US was providing Mexico, so Carrillo could monitor rival cartels. When I raised this point from the audience, McCaffrey did not seem pleased. In fact, he rudely rejected any information that contradicted his conclusions.

Somehow, the whole scheme started to fall apart when the Wasp Network jury ignored the advice of the two generals and found the spies guilty on June 8, 2001. Castro does not expect a judiciary behavior that is independent of the will of the military and, therefore, is likely to have been furious with the dismal results of Wilhem's and Atkeson's efforts on behalf of his spies. After a short delay, on June 20, 2001, he launched a national mobilization campaign, a la Elian, to win a reversal of that decision. However, of late, that campaign has turned mute and the box with patriotic slogans in GRANMA's front page has been removed. Castro must have lost any hope when the Justice Department proceeded to arrest two more spies related to the Wasp Network, both of whom entered their plea bargains the same day the DIA spy was arrested. This last arrest completely ridicules the claims of the two generals that Cuban intelligence had no capability to obtain any military information from the US.

Evidently, there was a difference of opinion between the FBI and the Justice Department and some people in the military left over from the Clinton Administration on the issue of the threat represented by Cuban spying. We can assume that the generals were acting on an option developed with some substantial inputs from the DIA analyst working for Castro. After some initial hesitation under the Bush Administration, it seems that the FBI and the prosecutors won from John Ashcroft the support denied to them by Janet Reno. We do not know what has been the position of the Rumsfeld team in relation to what the generals were advocating. But, the arrest of the Senior Analyst on Cuba at the DIA indicates that, if there was any support for their notion within the new Pentagon leadership, it is now a moot issue. It is evident Ashcroft has prevailed. Besides, the Pentagon will now have to revise all policies in which Castro's spy had an input. Quite a setback for Castro.

Ernesto F. Betancourt

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