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1983

CASTRO'S NARCOTICS TRADE

Sources:

The New York Times

The Washington Post

The Miami Herald

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Reader's Digest

NBC NEWS

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CASTRO'S NARCOTICS TRADE

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PREFACE

The indictment of four high Cuban government officials, including two members of Cuba's Communist Party Central Committee, in a U.S. District Court on charges of smuggling illegal narcotics into the United States dramatically focused national attention on the Cuban role in international narcotics trafficking. The fact that Castro has chosen to associate himself with criminal elements and international smugglers is a clear indication of his contempt for international law, and his intent to undermine American society.

This compilation of articles details the public history of the Castro government's involvement in this matter. I believe that the publication of this information will help underscore the undeniable role that Havana has played in this criminal business, and focus public attention on an important issue.

As a U.S. Senator and Chairman of the Senate Drug Enforcement Caucus, I have a special responsibility for and concern about the Cuban government's role in drug trafficking. Accordingly, I plan to hold hearings in the near future on this subject so as to investigate its full implications and inform the American people.

The Cuban American National Foundation is to be commended for its efforts to bring the facts on this issue to the attention of my colleagues in the U.S. Senate.

SENATOR PAULA HAWKINS
Washington, D.C.

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CASTRO'S DRUG TRAFFIC

Four senior Castro government officials were indicted on November 15, 1982 by a federal grand jury in Miami, Florida on charges of "conspiracy to import marijuana and methaqualone from Colombia to the United States by way of Cuba." (*The Washington Post*, November 6, 1982).

"In April [1982] Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, said the United States had evidence that Cuban intelligence authorities were using drug trafficking as a guise for running guns to guerrillas in Latin America." (*The New York Times*, November 6, 1982).

"The Cuban officials named in the indictment include: Rene Rodriguez Cruz, reportedly an official of the Cuban intelligence service, member of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee . . . ; Aldo Santamaria-Cuadrado . . . a vice admiral in the Cuban navy and a member of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee; Fernando Ravelo-Renedo, a Cuban ambassador to Colombia until the embassy in Bogota was closed as relations between the countries worsened in 1980. He is godfather of a 2-year-old daughter of Colombian drug trafficker Juan (Johnny) Crump. Crump is now in the federal witness protection program; Gonzalo Bassols-Suarez . . . a former minister-counsel of the Cuban embassy in Bogota and a member of the Cuban Communist Party." (*The Washington Post*, November 16, 1982).

The four Castro officials were among 14 men originally indicted. Seven of them were tried. "Federal authorities say they have little hope of bringing the Cuban officials to trial, unless they travel to a third country and are extradited to the United States." (*The Miami Herald*, February 9, 1983).

The Cuban officials were charged with conspiracy "to commit certain offenses against the United States," namely, to "use Cuba as a loading station and a source of supplies for ships transporting methaqualone tablets and marijuana from Colombia to the southern district of Florida." (*The New York Times*, November 6, 1982)

"For the last two years, according to federal authorities, the Castro government, in deals worked out by its former ambassador in Bogota, has allowed certain Colombian drug smugglers who have paid up to \$500,000 a boat to operate inside Cuban territorial waters, a safe haven from American ships and planes patrolling the Caribbean and just a few hours from Florida by speed boat." (*NBC Nightly News*, September 29, 1982).

"This narcotics ring was led by Jaime Guillot Lara, a Colombian drug trafficker now in custody in Mexico" according to a State Department statement. (*The Miami Herald*, January 27, 1982). "Castro's brother, Raul, met secretly with the drug trafficker last year, according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Sources." (*The Miami Herald*, January 24, 1982). "The CIA ques-

tioned Guillot in Mexico recently. The agency was particularly interested in reports of Guillot's ties with Castro's government and the M-19 guerrillas." (*The Miami Herald*, January 24, 1982).

"He has admitted to working for Havana and purchasing arms for the M-19 . . . The M-19 is Colombia's best known guerrilla movement . . . Colombian President Julio Turbay Ayala's government 'suspended' diplomatic relations with Cuba in March 1981 following the capture of several dozen M-19 guerrillas near the Ecuadorian border. They allegedly had been trained in Cuba and returned to Colombia through Panama." (*The Miami Herald*, January 27, 1982).

The break in diplomatic relations between Colombia and Cuba "proved only an inconvenience to Guillot-Lara and his Havana controllers. In succeeding months, two of Guillot's ships, the *Karina* and *Monarca* (renamed the *Zar*), delivered 200 tons of supplies and munitions to M-19 revolutionaries on Colombia's Pacific coast. On November 7, Colombian patrol boats spotted the *Karina* offloading another arms shipment on the Pacific coast. The ship was sunk and all but four crewmen perished. When he heard the news, Guillot-Lara fled to Cuba and then to Nicaragua." (*Reader's Digest*, July 1982).

"Guillot-Lara's close-working relationship with the Cubans was neatly demonstrated one day in 1981, when the Cubans mistakenly seized one of the 'mother ships' that Guillot-Lara had leased for his operations. He immediately got in touch with Cuban Ambassador Fernando Ravelo in Bogota, who advised his government of the mistake. The 'mother ship' was quickly released, with apologies to the captain." (*The New Republic*, February 28, 1983).

Guillot "was released from a Mexican jail in October 1982. He is a fugitive. Federal officials believe he is hiding in Europe." (*The Miami Herald*, February 9, 1983).

This February, "a federal jury . . . convicted five men of conspiring with Cuban government officials to smuggle drugs into South Florida . . . the three week trial featured testimony from two confessed drug smugglers and a self-labeled 'Cuban spy' turned informant, who said Cuban officials had instructed him to 'fill the United States with drugs.' All three witnesses testified that Cuban government officials were involved in a scheme to smuggle narcotics from Colombia into the United States, using Cuba as a safe haven and distribution point." (*The Miami Herald*, February 26, 1983).

"In the same case, four Cuban officials, including the commander of the Cuban navy, Vice Adm. Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado, were indicted on conspiracy charges . . . Since the United States has no diplomatic relations with Cuba, the Justice Department has no means to extradite the officials to stand trial" (*The New York Times*, April 4, 1983).

In New York, former Cuban agent, Mario Estevez Gonzalez, repeated much

of the testimony he offered during the Florida trial. He said "he returned to Cuba two or three times a month to deliver money to Interior Ministry officials and to receive new drug shipments from Colombia." (*The Miami Herald*, April 6, 1983). Richard D. Gregorie, who is in charge of the narcotics section for the United States Attorney's office in southern Florida, said that "Esteves said he delivered between \$2 million and \$3 million in cash to his control officers at the Interior Ministry in Cuba." (*The New York Times*, April 4, 1983). Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R., N.Y.) said that if other agents were as successful as Estevez in drug smuggling, Cuba may have received \$2 billion." (*The Miami Herald*, April 6, 1983).

Miami drug smuggler ran guns for Castro to guerrillas, agents say

By EDNA BUCHANAN
Herald Staff Writer

A Miami drug trafficker has smuggled arms to leftist guerrillas in Colombia and received assistance from the Castro government in Cuba, according to federal agents and Dade police.

If their information is accurate, the case could establish for the first time a Cuban link between drug smuggling into the United States and revolution in South America.

U.S. Attorney Atlee Wampler III said Saturday, "This is the first time that I can remember that material like that would come out in open judicial proceedings — and it will."

Castro's brother, Raul, met secretly with the drug trafficker last year, according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

sources, and a deal was struck:

The smuggler's narcotics ships would have access to Cuban ports for refueling, repairing and evading the U.S. Coast Guard. In exchange, he would run weapons and munitions to the leftist guerrilla M-19 movement in Colombia.

The DEA identified the smuggler as Jaime Guillot Lara, 35, a "major drug trafficker." Investigators say he wanted to be the next prime minister of Colombia.

Last month Guillot was jailed in Mexico City. This month he was indicted on marijuana conspiracy charges by a federal grand jury in Miami.

Two weeks ago he tried to kill himself, slashing his wrists in his jail cell. Mexican officials say he is recovering.

The CIA questioned Guillot in

"This is the first time that I can remember that material [indicating a Castro role in drug trafficking] would come out in open judicial proceedings,"

U.S. Attorney Atlee Wampler III



Mexico recently. The agency was said to be particularly interested in reports of Guillot's ties with Castro's government and the M-19 guerrillas.

Myles Frechette, director of the U.S. State Department's Cuban Affairs office, acknowledged Saturday that he had heard rumors of a man in jail who was linked to drug traffic, Cuba and the M-19 guerrillas. But he had not seen any official reports, he said.

DEA officials say their narcotics investigation began routinely last year, without any political implications, and "suddenly it began to shock everyone."

"It's significant," said John McCutcheon, DEA supervisor for the Fort Lauderdale area. "This is the first time we have had a major supplier of drugs, now indicted, who is definitely involved with an outfit such as the M-19."

Guillot, who owns a walled \$300,000 home in Miami on Sunset Drive, is a fugitive from Miami and his native Colombia, where he owns a development of 2,000 homes near Barranquilla.

Guillot was arrested on murder charges in Barranquilla in September 1976, police said, and in Mexico for fraud in 1978. The disposition of the charges was unknown.

Police said one of Guillot's marijuana ships, the Margot, was seized by the Colombian army in October 1977. The Colombians also seized 14 tons of marijuana in February 1979 from Guillot and 30 more tons 11 days later, they said.

In early 1981 Guillot was kidnapped in Miami by other drug dealers. He survived the ordeal. Metro-Dade police did not find out about it until Coral Gables police discovered his baby-blue Mercedes Benz 450 SL, riddled by bullets and submerged in a canal.

The Cuban connection apparently developed about a year ago, investigators say, when a Colombian drug trafficker, Johnny Crump, introduced Guillot to a Cuban diplomat. The diplomat, Gonzalo Bezol, was accompanied by his "chauffeur," who is a former chief of demolition for Cuban forces in Angola, according to intelligence sources.

Customs agents assisted by the DEA arrested Crump at the Omni Hotel in Miami a week ago on narcotics trafficking charges.

His bond is set at \$3 million. He was in possession of documents linking him to Cuban officials — including their home numbers in Cuba — police said.

Guillot, Bezol and the "chauffeur" went to Nicaragua last year, where they met with Raul Castro, Cuba's Armed Forces minister, the DEA said.

Soon afterward a vessel owned by Guillot delivered 200 tons of weapons to the guerrillas, federal agents said.

Two other of Guillot's ships, loaded with marijuana, were seized off the Virginia coast and in Tampa.

In November, one of Guillot's vessels, the Monarcha, rendezvoused twice at sea with a

weapons-laden ship called the Karina, taking on loads of guns and munitions, investigators say. A stolen Aeropescia airliner was used to transport one load of guns to an airstrip on a farm in the Colombian interior, they said.

The Colombian Navy caught and sank the Karina 10 miles off the coast. Members of the crew were captured or killed.

Colombian armed forces seized the Monarcha, and Guillot fled to Mexico City, investigators said.

He arranged to meet there with Bezol, they said, to receive a large amount of cash for his getaway. It is unknown if the money exchange ever took place, agents said. When police arrested him, he had only about \$7,000, officials said.

The U.S. government has begun extradition proceedings. Colombia also wants to extradite him.

"I don't think he wants to go anywhere," said McCutcheon. "He'd like to crawl under a rock." DEA agents say they had no interest in the guerrilla effort or in-

ternational politics, but were merely investigating a narcotics case.

"We proved that the M-19s are using narcotics to overthrow the government of Colombia, that Cubans are providing them with weapons, and that the man we indicted was to become prime minister," said DEA Agent Evelineo Fernandez.

Federal agents, local police and U.S. attorneys have met for weeks trying to piece together the international intrigue surrounding Guillot and his associates.

The recent murder of six Colombians in a Southwest Dade townhouse is an example of the problem according to Metro-Dade Homicide Lt. Raul Diaz.

Alfonso Jesus Arrubla, one of the dead in that still-unsolved murder was an M-19 guerrilla, police say.

"How," asked Homicide Commander Don Matthews, "can a local law enforcement agency deal with crimes the motives of which are 3,000 miles away?"

U.S. Links Drug Trader, In Miami to Raul Castro

MIAMI, Jan. 24 (UPI) — Federal agents and the Dade County police said today that the Government in Cuba had helped a Miami drug trafficker smuggle weapons to leftist guerrillas in South America.

Atlee Wampler 3d, a Federal attorney, said that this was the first time that material indicating a Castro Government role in drug trafficking "would come out in open judicial proceedings."

Sources in the Drug Enforcement Administration, according to The Miami Herald today, said

that President Fidel Castro's brother, Raul met with the drug trafficker last year and granted access to Cuban ports for refueling, repairing and evading the Coast Guard.

In exchange, the smuggler, identified as Jaime Guillot Lara, 35, would run weapons and munitions to the guerrilla movement M-19 in Colombia, the newspaper reported.

The United States drug agency labeled Mr. Guillot a "major drug trafficker." A Federal grand jury in Miami has indicted him on charges of marijuana conspiracy, but he is in jail in Mexico City.

U.S. links Cuba with drug rings Arms, cash went to aid guerrillas

By DON BOHNING
Herald Staff Writer

The State Department Tuesday accused Cuba of using a narcotics ring to funnel both arms and cash to leftist guerrillas battling to overthrow Colombia's constitutional government.

A department statement essentially confirmed and added new details to a Miami Herald story Sunday reporting on Cuban links to the narcotics ring and Colombia's M-19 guerrilla movement.

"We have information that since 1980 the [Fidel] Castro regime [in Cuba] has been using a Colombian narcotics ring to funnel arms as well as funds to Colombian M-19 guerrillas," the State Department said.

"This narcotics ring was led by Jaime Guillot Lara, a Colombian drug trafficker now in custody in Mexico," according to the statement. "He has admitted to working for Havana and purchasing arms for the M-19."

The State Department said it had information Guillot "had traveled twice to Cuba since October 1981 and on the second visit he received

\$700,000 from the Cuban government to purchase arms for the Colombian M-19 guerrillas."

The department said Guillot had then "played a principal role in transferring the arms he purchased from a ship to a Colombian plane hijacked by the M-19" and "reportedly also transferred funds to the guerrillas through an employee of a Panamanian bank."

The M-19 is Colombia's best known guerrilla movement. It takes its name from the date in April 1970 when they claim the late populist strongman Gustavo Rojas Pinilla was defrauded of a presidential election victory.

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration sources identified Guillot, 35, as a "major drug trafficker" who was indicted by a federal grand jury in Miami earlier this month on marijuana conspiracy charges.

Guillot was jailed in Mexico last month. He is reported to have attempted suicide in his jail cell two weeks ago by slashing his wrists. Mexican officials say he is recovering.

He owns a walled, \$300,000 home on Sunset Drive in Miami and is a fugitive in both Miami and his native Colombia where he has a 2,000-home development near Barranquilla.

Colombian President Julio Turbay Ayala's government "suspended" diplomatic relations with Cuba in March 1981 following the capture of several dozen M-19 guerrillas near the Ecuadoran border. They allegedly had been trained in Cuba and returned to Colombia through Panama.

The department statement Tuesday said that in return for Guillot's

Havana's Drug-Smuggling Connection

By NATHAN M. ADAMS

help "the Cubans facilitated the ring's trafficking by permitting mother ships carrying marijuana to take sanctuary in Cuban waters while awaiting feeder boats from the Bahamas and Florida."

The department said Guillot had admitted that he was planning an arms shipment to "an unspecified group in Bolivia" and that the arms were to be supplied "by an individual in Miami named Johnny."

The department statement said that Johnny was "Johnny Crump, a narcotics and arms trafficker now being detained in Miami on narcotics charges." It was from Crump's

introduction of Guillot to a Cuban diplomat that the narcotics-gunning deal evolved.

Customs agents assisted by the DEA arrested Crump at the Omni Hotel in Miami 10 days ago.

The State Department called the Guillot affair "the first firm information we have which implicates Cuba in narcotics trafficking" and "confirms through an independent source what we have suspected, that despite Cuban denials Cuba has provided arms to the Colombian M-19 guerrillas in addition to training them."

U.S. intelligence received the first informant reports as early as 1975. Scattered, largely unsubstantiated, they were greeted with skepticism. But by the fall of 1981 the proof was undeniable: in return for massive payoffs, Fidel Castro was providing the protection of Cuban ports and territorial waters to major drug smugglers shuttling between Latin America and the southeastern United States.

Since then, intelligence reports from federal and state law-enforcement agencies have revealed that the smuggling has pumped millions of dollars into Cuba's cash-starved economy. Additional millions have been transferred to Cuban-backed guerrilla movements throughout Latin America. Finally, Castro has used the channels of the drug traffic as a pipeline through which hundreds of tons of weapons and supplies have been funneled to Marxist insurgents in Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala, among others.

Here—compiled from law-enforcement and intelligence sources of three nations—is the full story.

AT 3 A.M. on July 21, 1981, Benedicto* maneuvered his 60-foot boat through the shoals of the Great Bahama Bank, 17 miles off Cuba's north coast. His radar registered the hundreds of sand bars and tiny cays scattered before him like pearls from a broken necklace. During his five-hour trip from Key West, Benedicto had kept his eyes glued to the screen, searching for that single blip which could represent a U.S. Coast Guard cutter. There was none, and he breathed easier.

Benedicto was a marijuana

*Not his real name.

smuggler, considered one of the best by his Colombian employers. Over the past several years, he had made numerous voyages between Colombia's La Guajira Peninsula and the coastal waters of southern Florida. But this was the first time that he had been directed to pick up a shipment in Cuba.

Shortly before dawn Benedicto and his associate, who skippered a companion vessel, caught sight of the sweeping beam of the lighthouse on Cayo Paredón Grande, a kidney-shaped cay well inside Cuban territorial waters. Using a predetermined frequency, Benedicto spoke several code words into the ship-to-shore

telephone. Twenty minutes later, he saw the Russian-made gunboat nosing through the swells toward him.

The gunboat guided the two vessels to a "mothership," a huge trawler that had left Colombia a week earlier with 56 tons of marijuana. At daybreak, two members of the Cuban intelligence service, the DC-1, began supervising the transfer of the cargo to the small boats. When they broke for lunch, the two intelligence officers asked Benedicto to purchase some items for them in Miami—closed-circuit-video security systems, U.S.-manufactured pistols, MAC-10 submachine guns.

The cargo transfer continued. At sunset the two small boats, each loaded with about a ton of marijuana, were ready for the return voyage to Key West. Provided with Cuban flags that would be discarded just outside U.S. waters, running without lights, and shepherded for much of the journey by a Cuban gunboat, Benedicto had an uneventful journey.

Over the next three months, Benedicto completed two more voyages to Cayo Paredón Grande. But early last November he was arrested by government authorities for marijuana smuggling after having been picked up by the Florida Marine Patrol. Facing a lengthy prison term, Benedicto cooperated, providing the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and other agencies with full details of his Cuban involvement.

Business Expense. Until the mid-1970s, Colombian smugglers shipped millions of tons of marijuana

and cocaine to the United States without the aid of the Cuban government. To reach the coasts of southern Florida—and their rendezvous with the small "feeder" boats that shuttle the cargo ashore—Colombian motherships usually sailed through the Windward Passage, a narrow strait between the eastern tip of Cuba and Haiti. The smallest error in navigation, however, could place a vessel within Cuban waters, where it would be seized, its cargo of drugs confiscated, and crew imprisoned.

Smuggler losses to Cuban patrol boats began to mount alarmingly. Then, in late 1975, some of Colombia's largest drug smugglers met secretly in Bogotá with Cuban Ambassador Fernando Ravelo-Renedo to negotiate a release of their ships and crews. Ravelo-Renedo responded with Havana's counteroffer. In return for payments of up to \$800,000 per vessel, the ambassador said, Cuba was prepared not only to ignore motherships detected in its waters, but to provide refueling and repair services in its ports. Upon leaving port, the vessels would be provided Cuban flags and gunboat escorts to the feeder boats out of the Florida Keys.

It was an offer the smugglers could not refuse. Even a modest 25-ton marijuana shipment could bring its owners as much as \$12 million when offloaded to American importers. Thus, \$800,000 was simply a business expense. For Havana, the arrangement provided cash for Marxist insurgents under way in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. And the smugglers

who carried drugs north could ferry supplies and weapons for guerrilla forces on their trips back.

True Picture. One of Havana's lucrative clients was Alfonso Cotes, a member of one of Colombia's most politically powerful smuggling families. Another was Alfonso Garcia, the owner of several large Colombian motherships plying Cuban waters. Cuban agents also established contacts with at least three major drug smugglers based in Miami, including Juan Lozano "Johnny Crump" Perez, a Colombian marijuana trafficker and convicted cocaine dealer.

But the most important of Havana's drug-smuggler clients was Jaime Guillot-Lara, also a Colombian. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had been watching him since 1975 and estimated that in the late '70s he was delivering over 400,000 pounds of marijuana, more than 20 million illicit mebaqualone pills and thousands of pounds of cocaine to U.S. markets each year. Meanwhile, he had acquired partial or outright ownership of nearly a half-dozen motherships.

A relative latecomer to the Cuban connection, Guillot-Lara was not introduced to Ambassador Ravelo-Renedo until the spring of 1980. Meeting at the Cuban embassy in Bogotá, Guillot-Lara and the ambassador quickly came to terms. In return for \$200,000 for each ten-ton marijuana shipment, Guillot-Lara would receive transit protection in Cuban waters. The tax was less than that levied on other traffickers because Guillot-Lara supported the budding M-19 terrorist movement in Colombia.

After transferring marijuana and cocaine cargoes in Cuba, Guillot-Lara agreed to carry arms to the M-19 insurgents. Over the next year, he met with Ravelo-Renedo or his associates in Bogotá and in Panama and Mexico to arrange arms deliveries to Colombia as well as drug transfers in Cuba. Meanwhile, in Havana, one of the most powerful officials in the Castro government was in charge of coordinating the smuggling activities of Guillot-Lara and other major Colombian traffickers. He was Rene Rodríguez Cruz, a ranking member of the elite Central Committee of the Communist Party as well as nearly half a dozen other organizations, and president of the powerful Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples—often used as a cover for DGI intelligence activities.

In March 1981, however, Castro's Colombian activities were upset when local authorities seized a cache of M-19 weapons. Arrested guerrillas implicated the Cuban embassy as an M-19 recruitment center, leading Colombia to break off diplomatic relations with Havana and expel Ambassador Ravelo-Renedo and his staff. The rupture proved only an inconvenience to Guillot-Lara and his Havana controllers. In succeeding months, two of Guillot-Lara's ships, the *Karina* and *Monarca* (renamed the *Zari*), delivered 200 tons of supplies and munitions to M-19 revolutionaries on Colombia's Pacific coast.

On November 7, Colombian patrol boats spotted the *Karina* offloading another arms shipment on the Pacific coast. The ship was sunk and

all but four crewmen perished. When he heard the news, Guillot-Lara fled to Cuba and then to Nicaragua.

Intelligence sources report that he met there with Cuban Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro, Fidel's brother. Guillot-Lara was instructed to travel to Mexico City, where the Cuban embassy provided a \$500,000 payment for an earlier arms shipment. The remainder of the money—a \$1-million letter of credit—was to be delivered by Cuban couriers for a future shipment.

But Guillot-Lara did not have the chance to close the deal. On November 23 he was tipped off that he was being followed by Mexican police. Panicked, he phoned the Cuban embassy for help. Later that night he was met by two Cuban military attachés who provided him with false documents. They drove him to the Nicaraguan embassy where he was given \$700,000 to cover bribes and other expenses involved in fleeing to France. But on November 25, he was arrested by Mexican authorities and charged with the possession of false documents.

Desperately, Cuban representatives tried to obtain Guillot-Lara's release before he could tell interrogators what he knew. They approached the Mexican government four times, but to no avail. Jaime Guillot-Lara was talking his head off. And U.S. law-enforcement and intelligence agencies had their first picture of the full extent of Cuba's use of the narcotics traffic.

On January 8, Guillot-Lara was

indicted by a federal grand jury in Miami for conspiracy to smuggle marijuana. A week later, his Miami associate in drugs and arms, Johnny Crump, was also indicted on smuggling charges. In April 1982 Crump was given a 25-year suspended sentence with a six-year probation. The reason—Crump has been cooperating with federal authorities.

But Guillot-Lara's fate is far from sealed. Despite a U.S. extradition request and the overwhelming evidence of his guilt, including his own admissions, U.S. officials are not optimistic that he will be returned to the United States for trial.

Even as these events took place Cuban officials, after holding talks with the Carter Administration in 1978 and 1979, agreed to take action against drug smugglers passing through or near their waters.*

More Proof. In Miami DEA and state and local law-enforcement agencies continue to unravel the ties between Havana and major drug rings. In addition to Guillot-Lara and Crump, they have documented two other key international traffickers:

José Medano Alvero-Cruz. A 42-year-old marijuana and cocaine smuggler, Alvero-Cruz ships an estimated 200,000 pounds of drugs into the United States each year via Cuban waters. His relationship with Havana dates back at least to November 1976 when he traveled to Spain and obtained a Cuban

passport—No. 247—from the Cuban embassy in Madrid.

He has been seen meeting with Raul Castro at least four times in the past three years. In 1978 he was instrumental in arranging the shipment of 5000 weapons to Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua.

In September 1979 Alvero-Cruz was arrested by DEA agents in Miami for delivering more than 20 pounds of cocaine during an undercover operation. When witnesses refused to testify—they had been threatened with death—the charges were dropped. But Alvero-Cruz was convicted on tax charges and is currently appealing a ten-year prison sentence. DEA agents expect him to try to flee to Havana.

Oiris Santis. A 39-year-old Cuban native, Santis boasts the aliases of *El Animal* and *El Ascino*. Suspected of having committed at least one Miami murder and ordering several others, he is also a drug smuggler whose vessels receive the protection of Cuban ports. He is suspected of arranging the purchase and delivery of weapons to El Salvador guerrillas. According to intelligence sources, Santis purchases drugs directly from Havana's middle-men who act as

agents for Colombia's M-19 terrorist faction. The movement is said to control several key cocaine laboratories in Colombia—as well as sizable marijuana shipments from La Guajira. The profits are then plowed back for operating expenses.

What, if anything, can be done to sever the Havana connection? One welcome development is the stepped-up activity of the President's Task Force on Crime in Southern Florida. Under the command of Vice President George Bush, over 200 agents from DEA and Customs—and five additional U.S. Coast Guard cutters—have been sent to southern Florida in an attempt to stem the flow of illicit drugs and arms. The effort has already established proof of continuing links between Cuba and the drug traffic. But the Task Force cannot accomplish the enormous task of severing the Havana connection alone. It is time for our State Department to apply pressure on Mexico and Colombia to assist us. And the time has long since passed for the Departments of State and Justice to make available to the American public the truth about Castro's involvement in the multi-billion-dollar drug trade.

*In April 1982 the *Miami Herald* reported that Cuba had renounced the agreement.

TRANSCRIPT

Program: NBC Nightly News

Station: WRC TV
NBC Network

Date: September 29, 1982 6:30 p.m.

City: Washington, DC

Subject: "The Cuban Connection"

ROGER MUDD: It is widely believed that the Cuban government deliberately emptied its jails onto the shores of Florida. And in tonight's "Special Segment" on the Cuban connection, Brian Ross has evidence the Castro government is also allowing and encouraging a multibillion dollar drug traffic into Florida.

BRIAN ROSS: The Church of San Ambrosio in a wealthy suburb of Bogota, Colombia. Two years ago, a baby girl was christened in this church. The baby's father, Johnny Crump, a very successful narcotics smuggler in Colombia. And the baby's godfather, Ambassador Fernando Rovello, the Ambassador to Colombia from Cuba.

Now this picture and the close relationship between a narcotics smuggler and the Cuban Ambassador is of great interest to the United States government. Federal law enforcement authorities say they have evidence that Ambassador Rovello, until the closing of the Cuban Embassy in Bogota in 1980, was not only Fidel Castro's man in Colombia, but also Castro's man in the narcotics business.

For the last two years, according to federal authorities, the Castro government, in deals worked out by its former ambassador in Bogota, has allowed certain Colombian drug smugglers who have paid up to \$500,000 a boat to operate inside Cuban territorial waters, a safe haven from American ships and planes patrolling the Caribbean and just a few hours from Florida by speed boat.

JOHNNY CRUMP: I was in Cuba at the time that the boat arrived. . . .
ROSS: Johnny Crump, the Colombian narcotics smuggler, says he was able to run his drugs through Cuba until early this year when he was caught in a cocaine deal in Miami. Now, to stay out of prison, Crump is providing federal authorities with details of his meetings and alleged drug dealings with Cuban government officials in Bogota and Havana.

CRUMP: They use that as a way to hurt the United States.

ROSS: By helping you as a drug smuggler.

CRUMP: Yeah. Right.

ROSS: And the small boats could come to the mother ship inside Cuban waters?

CRUMP: Inside Cuban waters. They motorize from the mother ship and then go smuggle. . . .

ROSS: Back to the United States.

CRUMP: . . . to the United States. . . .

ROSS: Crump says the Cubans knew which drug boats were his, because each of his boats used the code name Viviana, the name of his baby daughter, whose godfather was the Cuban Ambassador.

For the last three months at the Federal Courthouse in Miami, a grand jury has been hearing testimony about the alleged secret deals between Colombian drug smugglers and the Castro government. NBC News has learned that top officials of the Justice Department now believe that there is enough evidence to take the unusual step of asking for indictments against Cuban government officials, including Ambassador Rovello, on drug smuggling charges, even though it is unlikely that any of the Cuban officials could ever be brought to trial.

And federal authorities also say there's evidence that Cuban government intelligence service has been operating its own drug ring and that this man, a former sergeant in Cuban intelligence who has now defected, has admitted he was assigned to run cocaine and other drugs from Havana to Miami. On a flight out of the Bahamas, he showed us the route he took. At one point, he spotted a beached boat he says he was forced to abandon during one drug run. He took us to a remote drug smugglers' air strip where the wreckage of three planes was still on the ground. He says he operated as a spy and a drug dealer for the DGI, the Cuban equivalent of the CIA.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN [Translated]: Cuban intelligence ordered me to transport to Miami cocaine, for the first time on a fast boat to the border. I brought 60 kilos of cocaine to Miami.

VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH: We're concerned about Cuba's role in this.

ROSS: Vice President George Bush, who helped to set up a big federal drug task force in Florida, says whether it's for economic reasons or whatever reasons, there is little doubt Cuba has gone into the drug business.

VICE PRESIDENT BUSH: And I can't go into everything we might be trying to do about it. But I think there has been hard evidence that the kind of problem you mentioned exists.

ROSS: That has served as a base for some drug dealers'?

VICE PRESIDENT BUSH: That there is — that there is an involvement of Cuba in the — in the overall drug problem.

ROSS: This country is now spending a lot of money to stop drugs from being smuggled into Florida. But even with it all, federal authorities say those smugglers with connections in Havana are often beyond the reach of American law.

Brian Ross, NBC News, Miami.

MUDD: The Cuban government in Havana indicated to NBC News it would have no comment on the Brian Ross report.

Drug-traffic suspect is released from jail

By FABIOLA SANTAGO
Herald Staff Writer

The Mexican government has quietly released from jail a key figure in a case that U.S. authorities believe will prove a connection between Fidel Castro's government and South Florida's drug and arms smugglers.

Jaime Guillot Lara, 35, suspected of being a major drug trafficker, is also wanted here for prosecution on marijuana conspiracy charges stemming from a Jan. 8 federal grand jury indictment.

"We have information that he may be in Europe," said Drug Enforcement Administration spokesman Brent Eaton.

"He could have been a major witness had we ever been able to get our hands on him," Eaton said. "He was also a major defendant."

Eaton and a State Department official familiar with the complex case said the release hurts the case against the Cuban government because they may have lost their chances of putting Guillot on the witness stand. His testimony was expected to publicly embarrass Castro.

"Obviously, it's a disappointment," the State Department official said. "We had hoped to have him tried. But it [his release] doesn't

change the facts. We know what he did with the Cubans. The Cubans are just as guilty now as they were [when Guillot was in Mexico and U.S. officials questioned him]."

Until his release Sept. 23, Guillot, a Colombian who once lived in Miami, had been jailed in Mexico City on charges of traveling with false documentation, Eaton said, but he added that he didn't know why Guillot was released.

Government officials in Mexico, a country that has friendly relations with Cuba and the United States, could not be reached for comment. The Cuban government has denied the accusations about the connections with drug smuggling.

Guillot, who owned a \$300,000 house in Miami on Sunset Drive, is also wanted in Colombia, where he owns a development of 2,000 homes in Barranquilla. He fled to Mexico last November, investigators say, after the Colombian government caught and seized one of his weapons-laden ships.

According to DEA sources, Guillot had made a deal with Cuban officials: the smugglers' ships would have access to Cuban ports for refueling, repairing and evading the U.S. Coast Guard, and in exchange, Guillot would run weapons and ammunition to the leftist M-19 guerrilla movement in Colombia.

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Four Cuban Officials Indicted in Drug Smuggling

Havana Said Haven For Colombia Goods

By Mary Thornton
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two members of the Cuban Communist Party, Central Committee and two other high-level Cuban officials were among 14 persons indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury in Miami on charges of conspiring to import marijuana and methaqualone from Colombia to the United States by way of Cuba.

The Cuban officials were charged with allowing Cuba to be used "as a loading station and source of supplies" for drug smugglers bringing drugs from Colombia to the United States from 1978 until April of this year.

The indictments marked the first time that Cuban officials have been formally accused of drug trafficking, although there have been widespread reports that the Castro government was heavily involved in smuggling drugs from Colombia to the United States via the communist island nation.

The Reagan administration announced last month that it intended to get tough on drug traffickers by setting up 12 regional task forces covering the country with 1,200 new

agents and prosecutors. Drug Enforcement Administration officials said yesterday that they decided to seek indictments against the Cuban officials to draw attention to the role of the Castro government in drug trafficking in the Americas. Sources said there is little hope of prosecuting the Cubans, since the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Jim Judge, a DEA spokesman, said the indictments followed a three-year investigation. During that period, he said, Colombians brought into this country 2.5 million pounds of marijuana, 23 million methaqualone tablets, known as Quaaludes, and 80 pounds of cocaine. Those drugs would have a street value of more than \$800 million, officials said. Much of the marijuana and methaqualone came through Cuba.

A DEA source alleged that the smugglers were led by a Colombian named Jaime Guillot-Lara, also indicted yesterday, who is accused of paying off Cuban officials so that his boats could stop at Cuban ports for supplies and refueling.

In return, the source said, Guillot-Lara was allegedly paid by Cuban officials to smuggle arms to the M19 leftist guerrilla movement in Colom-

U.S. DRUG CHARGES

CITE 4 CUBAN AIDES

10 Other Men Indicted in Miami in Large-Scale Smuggling

By GEORGE VOLSKY

Special to The New York Times

MIAMI, Nov. 5 — Four high-ranking Cuban officials, including the chief of the Cuban Navy, were among 14 people indicted here today on Federal charges of smuggling narcotics into the United States.

Stanley Marcus, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, who announced the indictment, said he believed this was the first time an official of the Government of President Fidel Castro of Cuba had been charged with such offenses. He said the indictment was strictly a criminal matter and was not a foreign policy maneuver.

A Cuban official in Washington said today that the charges against the four Cubans were "all lies." There was no immediate comment from Havana.

Based on 3-Year Investigation

While officials here would not comment for the record, the indictment was preceded by a three-year investigation by agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Peter F. Gruden, head of the agency's Miami office, said the case "is important in view of the substantial amount of drugs involved." According to the indictment, more than 5 million methamphetamine tablets and more than 1,000 pounds of marijuana were smuggled into Florida in two separate operations

between the fall of 1979 and January 1981.

Mr. Gruden said the four Cubans indicted are presumably in Cuba. It was considered unlikely that the four would come to the United States to face trial.

Eight of the 10 others indicted, mostly Cuban-Americans, were reported in Federal custody.

Before this year Cuban officials have not been linked to drug trafficking, but in April Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, said the United States had evidence that Cuban intelligence authorities were using drug trafficking as a guise for running guns to guerrillas in Latin America.

The Cubans indicted were: Vice Adm. Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado, who is also a member of the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party of Cuba;

René Rodríguez Cruz, another Central Committee member, who is president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, the government agency that coordinates activities of foreigners visiting Cuba;

Fernando Ravelo Renedo, who used to be Cuba's Ambassador in Bogotá, Colombia, and who is now a high official in the Foreign Ministry;

Gonzalo Bassols Suárez, minister-counselor in the Bogotá Embassy at the time of the activities charged in the indictment.

One of those indicted, Jaime Guillot Lara, a Colombian, is reputed to be an international drug trafficker, and his whereabouts are unknown. He was arrested several months ago in Mexico, charged with smuggling. He is also wanted by Colombia, where he has been accused of smuggling arms from Cuba for Colombian leftist guerrillas. But late last month he was released by Mexican authorities and left Mexico City for Spain, from which he traveled to an unknown destination.

9 Cuban-Americans Charged

The nine others indicted, all Cuban-

Others indicted include five Cubans who are already serving time in American prisons on drug charges: Cornelio Ramos-Valladares, David Lorenzo-Perez, Jorge Felipe Llerena-Delgado, Jose Rafael Martinez and Hector Gonzales. A Colombian named in the indictments, Levino Orobio-Michelena, is also in a U.S. prison on drug charges.

Another indictment listed charges against Julian Losada, who is still in Colombia.

"would supervise in Cuba the protection and resupply of ships transporting marijuana from Colombia to the United States by way of Cuba," the indictment says.

• Fernando Ravelo-Renedo, Cuban ambassador to Colombia until the embassy in Bogota was closed as relations between the countries worsened in 1980. He is godfather of a 2-year-old daughter of Colombian drug trafficker Juan (Johnny) Crump. Crump is now in the federal witness protection program.

• Gonzalo Bassols-Suarez, identified as a former minister-counselor of the Cuban embassy in Bogota and a member of the Cuban Communist Party.

A DEA source said that Rodríguez-Cruz and Santamaria-Cuadrado are both close associates of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

Two of the men indicted were arrested yesterday in Miami. They were Cubans Jose Domingo-Martinez and Alberto Cortez.

Others indicted include five Cubans who are already serving time in American prisons on drug charges: Cornelio Ramos-Valladares, David Lorenzo-Perez, Jorge Felipe Llerena-Delgado, Jose Rafael Martinez and Hector Gonzales. A Colombian named in the indictments, Levino Orobio-Michelena, is also in a U.S. prison on drug charges.

Another indictment listed charges against Julian Losada, who is still in Colombia.

One of his boats was seized by the Colombian government in 1981 with 100 tons of weapons aboard. Guillot-Lara was wanted by U.S. authorities for a 1978 drug indictment and by Colombian authorities on weapons charges. He was arrested last year in Mexico City and charged with being involved in terrorist activities. But Mexican authorities released him last month. He fled to Spain and is believed to be in hiding in Europe.

The Justice Department has sent a formal protest to the Mexican government over his release.

A DEA source said that all of the boats allegedly used in the operation were renamed "Viviana" and that the Cuban navy was under orders not to fire upon any boat bearing that name.

The Cuban officials named in the indictment include:

• René Rodríguez-Cruz, reported by an official of the Cuban intelligence service, member of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee and president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship With The Peoples. It was in the last capacity in 1980 that Rodríguez helped organize the boatlift of nearly 125,000 Cubans to the United States as refugees—including some convicts from Cuban jails.

• Aldo Santamaria-Cuadrado, also known as Rene Baeza-Rodriguez, who the indictment identifies as a vice admiral in the Cuban navy and a member of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee. He

Cuban officials co-conspirators, defendant says

By JAY DUCASSI

Herald Staff Writer

A self-confessed dope smuggler has accused four high-level Cuban government officials of conspiring with him to smuggle drugs into the U.S.

During a hearing in federal court in Miami Thursday, David Lorenzo Perez Jr. pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiring to smuggle Quaaludes into the United States.

In a signed statement, Perez told U.S. attorneys he met with two of the officials at Paredon Grande, Cuba, in October and November 1980. There, he said, they worked out a plan to smuggle 8.5 million Quaalude tablets into South Florida.

He also told attorneys he met the other two Cuban officials in Colombia in connection with smuggling drugs to the United States.

His statement bolstered the U.S. government's case against the four Cuban officials, who were indicted Nov. 5 with 10 others — including Perez — on charges of conspiring

born Americans, were David Lorenzo Perez Jr., Hector Gonzalez, Quinones, Jorge Felipe Llerena Delgado, Jose Domingo Martinez Valdes, Jose Rafael Martinez, Cornelio Ramos Valladares, Alberto Cortes, Levynio Orobio Michelelena and Julian Losada.

Of the nine Cuban-Americans, only Mr. Losada is at large, according to Mr. Gruden.

The indictment asserts that the 14 conspired "to commit certain offenses against the United States." Part of the conspiracy was purportedly an agreement between Ambassador Ravelo, Mr. Bassols, Mr. Rodriguez Cruz, Mr. Guillot and others to "use Cuba as a loading station and source of supplies for ships transporting methaqualone tablets and marijuana from Colombia to the southern district of Florida, by way of Cuba."

According to the eight-count indictment, Admiral Santamaria and others "would supervise, in Cuba, the protection and resupply of ships transporting methaqualone tablets and marijuana, from Colombia to the United States."

Admiral Santamaria and Mr. Rodriguez Cruz are known to be close friends of President Castro. Both belong to a small group that was the core of the guerrilla movement under Mr. Castro that overthrew the dictatorship

of President Fulgencio Batista in 1959.

A State Department source said today that the Justice Department had discussed the case with the State Department before obtaining the indictments. Another State Department official said he could not say whether Washington had been in touch with Havana about the case.

Mr. Marcus also said that once criminal charges were filed against an individual, he could be arrested at any time. "The U.S. may be able to apprehend them in another country," he said.

In response to the indictment of the four Cuban officials, Miguel Martinez, the press officer of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, which handles Cuban affairs in the absence of an embassy, said today: "It is all lies. There is not a single truth in those allegations and that's that."

Asked to discuss the indictments further, Mr. Martinez said, "We are not going to elaborate."

In a telephone interview, Mr. Marcus, the United States Attorney, said the indictment of the Cuban officials simply represented the "application of American law by the grand jury" and was in no way a foreign policy maneuver. "I'm not involved with foreign policy," he said.

to smuggle drugs into South Florida. "There are several witnesses that can testify to [Cuban involvement]," said Drug Enforcement Administration spokesman Brent Eaton, "but now one of the defendants admits it as well."

The four officials include ex-diplomats Fernando Ravelo, Renedo and Gonzalo Bassols Suarez, Vice Admiral Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado and Central Committee Member Rene Rodriguez Cruz.

U.S. officials have said the four men permitted drug smugglers "to use Cuba as a loading station and source of supplies for ships transporting" Quaaludes and marijuana.

None of the four is in U.S. custody, and American officials have expressed little hope of bringing them to trial unless the officials travel to a third country and are extradited.

Shortly after the indictment of the officials, the Cuban government denounced the charges as "nonsense" and "lies."

Eaton said some of the seven other defendants now in custody have indicated they also will enter guilty pleas.

"When you have people pleading guilty, it just disproves what the Cuban government was trying to disseminate," he said.

Cubans lauded drug runs to U.S., smuggler testifies

By JAY DUCASSI
Herald Staff Writer

A confessed drug smuggler told a Miami federal jury Tuesday that he was welcomed to Cuba by high-ranking government officials who offered him food, cigars and coffee during a drug pickup at sea in the summer of 1980.

David Lorenzo Perez Jr., who testified that he went to Cuba to pick up a shipment of six million methaqualone tablets, said one of the officials told him "he was happy we were bringing so many drugs into the United States."

Perez was the first witness Tuesday in the government's case against seven Latins accused of smuggling marijuana and methaqualone — commonly known as Quaaludes — into the United States, using Cuba as safe haven and loading base. The trial opened Monday.

Defense attorneys blasted the government case, saying it was built on the testimony of drug traffickers like Perez who have turned evidence for the government in return for immunity.

"You're going to hear from low-lives," said attorney Irwin Licher. "scum of the earth who are going to come in here and say that now they are going to work for the cause of liberty and justice."

Cuba denies it

Since January 1982, U.S. authorities have insisted that Cuban offi-

cials have been involved in the drug trade.

The Cuban government has vehemently denied any involvement, calling the charges "falshoods and calumnies."

Nevertheless, four Cuban officials are among 14 persons indicted last November. They are:

- Fernando Ravello Renedo, former Cuban ambassador to Colombia.

- Gonzalo Bassols Suarez, former second-in-command of the Cuban embassy in Colombia under Ravello Renedo.

- Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado, a vice-admiral in the Cuban navy and a member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

- Rene Rodriguez Cruz, president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples and a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party.

Federal authorities say they have little hope of bringing the Cuban officials to trial, unless they travel to a third country and are extradited to the United States.

Only seven of the 14 originally indicted are at the trial: Hector Gonzalez Quibones, Jorge Felipe Llerena Delgado, Jose Domingo Martinez Valdes, Jose Rafael Martinez, Cornelio Ramos Valladares, Alberto Cortes and Levinio Orobio Michelena.

They face eight charges of conspiring with Cuban officials to im-

port illegal drugs into the United States.

Perez, who was also indicted, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to import an illegal substance and agreed to testify for the government in exchange for immunity on the other charges.

Tuesday, Perez told of a complicated drug run in August 1980, which he said was set up by Jaime Guillot Lara, a Colombian also named in the indictment.

Guillot, who was released from a Mexican jail in October 1982, is a fugitive. Federal officials believe he is hiding in Europe.

Perez testified that he arranged with Guillot to bring the drugs from Cuba and find buyers in the United States.

Perez described the alleged pickup arrangement Tuesday: "Two boats would meet a 'mother ship' off the northern coast of Cuba, near Guinchos Key. The boats would take the drugs to Riding Rocks in the Bahamas, where three speedboats would finish the journey to the United States.

Perez, who was awaiting the shipment in the Bahamas, said he

was forced to go to Guinchos Key when the two boats did not return. During the trip, his own vessel, The Lazy Lady, broke down in Cuban waters, near Paredon Grande.

The vessel took down the American flag, hoisted a Cuban flag and sailed into Cuba, Perez said. They were met at first by two Cuban gunboats, and hours later, were taken aboard a 72-foot shrimp boat, where Perez was welcomed by two Cuban officials he later identified as Santamaria and Rodriguez.

'Anything you want'

"You can have anything you want, coffee, cigars," Perez said Rodriguez told him. Watching the exchange, Perez said, was Vice-Adm. Santamaria. "He just listened and said everything was OK," Perez said.

Rodriguez asked Perez if he knew what cargo the mother ship was carrying. When Perez acknowledged it was a methaqualone shipment, Rodriguez replied he was "happy" it was to be taken to the United States.

Cuba bankrolled drug run, witness claims

By JAY DUCASSI
Herald Staff Writer

High-ranking officials of the Cuban government who allegedly helped smuggle drugs into the United States were to share in the profits from the sale of the narcotics, a smuggler-turned-informant told a Miami federal jury Wednesday.

The payments were to be made in return for allowing the drug traffickers to use Cuba as a safe haven and loading base, and to repay the officials for money Cuba spent to buy the drugs in Colombia, said David Lorenzo Perez, Jr.

Perez, 27, a confessed smuggler testifying for the U.S. government, said he met with Rene Rodriguez Cruz, a member of the Central Committee of Cuba's Communist Party, during a drug pickup at sea in late 1980.

"He [Rodriguez] told me some of the money used to buy the merchandise in Colombia was provided by the Cuban government," said Perez, who added he arranged for the delivery and sale of the drugs in South Florida.

It was Perez's second day of testimony in the trial of seven men accused of conspiring with Cuban officials to smuggle drugs into the United States. The trial, expected to last two weeks, began Monday.

Four Cuban officials have also been indicted, but have not been arrested. They are: Rodriguez Cruz, who heads the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples; Cuban Navy Vice Admiral Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado; Fernando Ravelo Renedo, former Cuban ambassador to Colombia; and

Gonzalo Bassols Suarez, minister-counselor at the Cuban embassy in Colombia until 1981.

Two others named in the eight-count indictment have avoided arrest. Perez, also charged in the case, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and traded his testimony for immunity on the other charges.

Perez said Wednesday he was responsible "to the Colombians and to the Cuban government" for keeping the records of drug sales in the United States. "The Cuban government was financing most of these operations," Perez said.

The Cubans' cut from the operation would have amounted to \$800,000 from the sale of about 10 million tablets of methaqualone, and a third of the profits from the sale of 23,000 pounds of marijuana, Perez said.

The pills, he said, were bought in Colombia for 10 cents a piece. He planned to sell them here for 70 cents each.

But a case of the fitters prevented the Quaalude tablets from reaching the United States, Perez said.

Nervous drug traffickers feared detection when an engine on their ship, the *Lazy Lady*, broke down and a Coast Guard helicopter flew overhead.

"They had to throw the pills overboard," Perez said. Into the ocean went 426 boxes of Quaaludes — between 10 and 12 million tablets — with a market value of about \$7 million.

Another operation seemed to go smoothly — at first. Smugglers were able to pick up a

shipment of marijuana from a Colombian "mother ship" off the Cuban coast. Of the 14 speedboats that made the pickup, only one was stopped by the Coast Guard on arrival in South Florida.

But the pot turned out to be "low grade," Perez said, and could not be sold for its full value.

He said the problems angered Jaime Guillot Lara, a Colombian named in the indictment as one of the leaders in the conspiracy. Guillot shipped the drugs from Colombia and arranged with Cuban officials for their safe passage through the island, Perez said.

"He [Guillot] told me we had to make it up to the Cuban government," Perez said. "I told him I wasn't paying any money to the Cuban government or whoever for something [for which] I had not received any money."

In the end, Perez said, he made a partial payment to Guillot of \$450,000. Perez was not able to make any more payments. He was sent to prison shortly after to begin serving a nine-year sentence on an unrelated drug conviction.

During cross examination Wednesday, defense attorney John Lazzarus probed Perez's history as a drug dealer. Perez said he started in the drug trade in 1976 driving marijuana trucks.

He made his first large drug transaction in 1978, he said, when he arranged for drug ships to offload their cargo in Louisiana. He said he made \$535,000 in the deal, but was arrested soon after and convicted in 1980.

A Cuban official 'told me some of the money used to buy the merchandise in Colombia was provided by the Cuban government.'

David Lorenzo Perez

U.S. finishes its case in Cuba-linked trial

By JAY DUCASSI
Herald Staff Writer

The deals were struck at fancy hotels in Colombia and Havana. The details were ironed out at the homes of high-ranking members of Cuba's Communist government.

And in August of 1980, drug-laden ships began plying the drug route between Colombia, Cuba and the United States, using the island as a refueling base and distribution point.

The meetings, federal prosecutors in Miami said Thursday, marked the beginning of "a chain conspiracy" that ultimately resulted in the indictment of 14 men, including four Cuban government officials.

Thursday afternoon, Colombian smuggler Johnny Crump Perez, the prosecutors' first link in the chain, closed the government's case in a trial that began Feb. 7 in Miami federal court.

Crump, a lawyer before becoming a drug smuggler, told the 12-member jury that he arranged the initial high-level contacts for the smuggling scheme.

Crump described a series of meetings that began in November of 1979, when he introduced his friend, Cuban Ambassador to Colombia Fernando Ravelo Renedo, to high-powered Colombian smuggler Jaime Guillot Lara.

At the meeting in Bogota's Hilton Hotel, Guillot asked Ravelo if he could use the island as "a sort of aircraft carrier, a point to refuel and... an area of safety in Cuban territorial waters."

"Ravelo said he would try to talk with Cuba, with Havana, to see what could be arranged to allow [Guillot's] ships to reach Cuba's territorial waters," Crump said.

Guillot got his answer in March 1980, when Crump, Guillot and Ravelo met at the Cuban diplomat's Bogota residence.

"Ravelo explained that they had permission from Cuba to use Cuban territorial waters to protect the ships loaded with drugs," Crump said. "He told Jaime Guillot that they would need a month's notice before dispatching the vessels."

Between March and July 1980, Crump said, the group met "six or seven times."

The meetings were attended by Crump, Guillot and Ravelo, along with Gonzalo Bassols Suarez, the ambassador's second in command in Bozora, and Rene Rodriguez Cruz, head of Cuba's Institute of Friendship with the Peoples.

The next meeting was held at Bassols' home in Bogota. Guillot told the Cuban officials he was ready to send the first boat to Cuba within 45 days.

Ravelo, Crump said, suggested that for purposes of identification, all the drug ships use the same name. Crump's pregnant wife was due to deliver her baby in August, and the couple had decided that, if they had a baby girl, her name would be Viviana. Ravelo was to be the girl's godfather.

"Ravelo said we should use the name Viviana and told Jaime to chose a flag... " to identify the boats.

Guillot offered Ravelo half a million dollars for each ship that was allowed to go through Cuba. "And that was the deal that was made," Crump said.

On Aug. 14, Crump flew to Havana via Panama. At the Havana Libre Hotel, Crump said, he was met by Ravelo, Bassols, Rodriguez and Cuba's former ambassador to Venezuela, Norberto Hernandez Curbelo.

The next day, Ravelo told Crump that arrangements had been made and that "the Cuban Navy had orders to protect the ship Viviana, which was coming loaded with drugs from Colombia."

His friendship with Ravelo, Crump said, served to solve logistical problems, easing passage of the ships through Cuban waters.

According to the prosecution, the seven men on trial in Miami were involved in

The Miami Herald February 26, 1983

Five convicted, two freed in Cuban drug scheme

By JAY DUCASSI
And FABIOLA SANTAGO
Herald Staff Writers

A federal jury Friday convicted five men of conspiring with Cuban government officials to smuggle drugs into South Florida. Two defendants were found innocent of the charges.

The seven men stood silent as the verdicts were read. Seated nearby, their mothers, wives and sisters wept quietly.

The three-week trial featured testimony from two confessed drug smugglers and a self-labeled "Cuban spy" turned informant,

picking up, distributing and selling the drugs. They are Hector Gonzalez Quiñones, Jorge Llerena Delgado, Jose Martinez Valdes, Jose Rafael Martinez, Cornelio Ramos Valladares, Alberto Cortes and Levino Orovito Michelena.

Also indicted, but never arrested were four Cuban officials, Ravelo, Rodriguez, Bassols and Cuban Vice Admiral Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado.

The Cuban government has denied any participation in the drug trade.

Federal officials say that from 1977 to 1981, Guillot smuggled at least 2.5 million pounds of marijuana, 25 million methaqualone tablets and 80 pounds of cocaine to the United States. They have not specified how much of that shipment they believe was sent through Cuba.

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who said Cuban officials had instructed him to "fill the United States with drugs."

All three witnesses testified that Cuban government officials were involved in a scheme to smuggle narcotics from Colombia into the United States, using Cuba as a safe haven and distribution point.

"It [the outcome] demonstrates that members of the drug community are using the island of Cuba to assist them in their drug activity," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Gregorie, one of two prosecutors in the case.

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Drugs, guns, and terrorists.

K.G.B. CONNECTIONS

THE REVELATIONS about the possible complicity of the Bulgarian secret police in the shooting of the Pope have produced a grudging admission, even in previously skeptical quarters, that the Soviet Union may be involved in international terrorism. Some patterns have emerged in the past few years that tell us something about the extent to which the Kremlin may use terrorism as an instrument of policy. A great deal of information has lately come to light, some of it accurate, some of it not. One of the most interesting developments appears to be the emergence of a close working relationship between organized crime (especially drug smugglers and dealers) and some of the principal groups in the terrorist network. This embrace can be found in at least three countries: Turkey, Italy, and Cuba. . . .

Finally, there is the Cuban operation in the United States. Four members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party were indicted by a Dade County, Florida, grand jury last November 5 for drug smuggling: Rene Rodriguez Cruz (the president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with People), Vice-Admiral Aldo Santamaria Cuadrado of the Navy, ex-ambassador to Colombia Fernando Ravelo-Renedo, and former minister-counselor to Colombia Gonzalo Bassols Suarez. (The details of this case were written up in detail by Nathan Adams in *Reader's Digest* last July.) I have investigated the question at some length in both Washington and Miami. The U.S. did a first-class job of infiltration. The picture is reminiscent of the one in Turkey and Italy, except that the "connection" in Miami is not Bulgarian, but Cuban. It is clear from the list of indicted co-conspirators that the Cubans were caught running drugs out of Colombia.

Their principal agent was Jaime Guillot-Lara, a Colombian narcotics trafficker who dreamed that cooperation with Cuba and the Cuban-backed M-19 guerrilla movement in Colombia would one day make him president of his country. Instead, he landed in a Mexican jail late in 1981, and after cooperating with Mexican authorities (who in turn had promised to turn him over to the United States) he escaped from prison, surfaced briefly in Spain, and then disappeared. Some believe that Guillot-Lara is dead, others that he is alive in Cuba.

The story of this operation was pieced together by a variety of American law-enforcement agencies working together over months. Agents and officials from Customs, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Treasury Department, and the F.B.I. cooperated in the investigations. They found that in late 1981, Guillot-Lara arranged to pick up a marijuana shipment off the coast of the Guajira Peninsula, and loaded it onto his boat, which already contained an arms shipment that had been picked up off the coast of Panama. Thus loaded, the ship went to the port of Dibulla, where the arms were unloaded and carried by truck to a clandestine airstrip nearby. Five armed M-19 terrorists guarded the arms until an Aerospeca cargo plane, hijacked by other M-19s, arrived two days later. In the meantime, the marijuana was delivered to the same airstrip, and was given to the pilot of a small private airplane with U.S. registration, who departed as soon as the loading was finished.

When the Aerospeca plane arrived, it was loaded with the arms: 55 large boxes (containing 10 Belgian FAL rifles each) and 90 small boxes (each containing 1,000 cartridges of 7.62 mm. ammunition). The plane couldn't hold it all, and 15 of the ammunition boxes were left behind, hidden in a marsh close to the air strip at a point that could only be reached by canoe or launch. The arms were flown to the Ortegua River in Caqueta Department, where an M-19 unit was waiting. Guillot-Lara had coordinated the transfer of drugs from Colombia to Miami, and the arrival of weapons from Florida (via

Central America) to the terrorists in Colombia. On other occasions, the entire process seems to have been carried out by sea, where the Cuban Navy provided safety to Guillot-Lara, as it did (and does) for numerous other drug traffickers. The arrangement was simple and profitable for the Cubans: large "mother ships" would wait safely in Cuban waters under protection of Castro's navy until smaller "feeder ships" arrived. Then the "mother ship" would move just outside Cuban waters, make whatever transfer was required, and return to safe haven. The Cubans charged a fee for these services ranging from \$200,000 to \$800,000 per transaction (a small percentage of the profits that could be realized, of course), and recruited some of the traffickers to run arms as well as drugs. Guillot-Lara's close working relationship with the Cubans was neatly demonstrated one day in 1981, when the Cubans mistakenly seized one of the "mother ships" that Guillot-Lara had leased for his operations. He immediately got in touch with Cuban Ambassador Fernando Ravelo in Bogota, who advised his government of the mistake. The "mother ship" was quickly released, with apologies to the captain.

FOR THOSE who have been following international terrorism for the past decade, a pattern of close ties between drug smugglers and terrorists is somewhat surprising. The Red Brigades used to brag of their independence from other organizations, and many so-called revolutionary movements avoided working relations with organized crime, because of a certain moral repugnance and because such contacts inevitably carry risks. Fidel Castro used to boast of his hatred of drug traffickers; he even cooperated with the United States by arresting some smugglers and turning them over to American authorities. Yet today some of the top members of the Cuban regime and various terrorist groups in Latin America seem deeply involved in drug running. What explains this apparent turnaround?

From the Kremlin's standpoint, the relations with

organized crime would serve at least two purposes. The Russians are alarmingly short of hard cash these days—one of the effects of the greatly strengthened dollar, and of the continued failure of the Soviet economic system—and running weapons or drugs is one sure way to make big money in a hurry. Moreover, the directions of the flow are ideologically attractive: drugs go to the bourgeois countries, where they corrupt and kill, while the arms go to pro-Communist terrorist groups in the third world (or, as in the case of Italy, the first world).

To be sure, the Russians did not invent arms or drug trafficking, any more than they invented terrorism or political assassination. But now they appear to be actively involved at both ends (M-19's military leader, Jaime Bateman, spent some time in Moscow, for example), and this involvement gives the traffickers and the terrorists a new strength. Yuri Andropov's old organization, the K.G.B., has apparently become a major backer of drug smugglers, arms runners, and terrorists, despite the risks of discovery, despite the old reticence to dabble in such corrupt practices, and despite the current backlash against these operations. Are they really so desperate for money? Or have they gotten hooked themselves?

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A Defector Tells Of Drug Dealing By Cuba Agents

Trafficking in New York and Florida Described

By SELWYN RAAB

A Cuban defector has told Federal and New York State law enforcement officials that agents of the Cuban Government conducted narcotics trafficking in the New York metropolitan area and in Florida in 1980 and 1981.

The defector, Mario Estebes Gonzalez, was arrested on drug charges 16 months ago. Since then, in testimony in Federal District Court in Miami and in statements to officials, Mr. Estebes has said that his chief mission on behalf of the Cuban Government was to distribute cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine tablets in New York, northern New Jersey and Florida.

He has testified that he delivered between \$2 million and \$3 million to Cuban officials from proceeds of drug trafficking in the United States in a 15-month period.

Mr. Estebes told Federal officials that he and about 3,000 other Cuban agents infiltrated into the United States among 125,000 refugees who were allowed to leave Cuba from the port of Mariel in the spring of 1980.

Immunity From Prosecution

In return for his cooperation, he is being protected by the Federal Government and has been granted immunity from prosecution for some narcotics trafficking crimes he has admitted.

In Washington, Miguel Martinez, the first secretary and press spokesman of

the Cuban Government's Cuban Interest Section in Washington, declined to comment on Mr. Estebes's allegations. The United States and Cuba have no formal diplomatic relations and there has been no comment from Havana about Mr. Estebes's arrest and statements.

Richard D. Gregorie, who is charge of the narcotics section for the United States Attorney's office in southern Florida, said Mr. Estebes's allegations about the Cuban Government's complicity in narcotics trafficking were "very credible." Many aspects of Mr. Estebes's statements have been "independently corroborated," Mr. Gregorie asserted in an interview.

Arrested by Coast Guard

Justice and State Department officials gave various explanations for the Cuban Government's purported role in drug deals. The officials offered these theories about why the Cubans had become involved in drugs in the United States: to obtain hard foreign currency for use in international trade; to retaliate against American trade restrictions on Cuba; to cause social unrest in the United States, or to help finance leftist movements in Latin America.

The 33-year-old Mr. Estebes was arrested by the Coast Guard on Nov. 29, 1981, while he was transporting 2,500 pounds of marijuana in a speedboat off the Florida coast. He was indicted on a charge of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and faced a maximum prison term of 15 years. Because he was cooperating, he got a nine-month prison sentence.

Mr. Gregorie, an assistant United States attorney, said Mr. Estebes voluntarily admitted his role as a Cuban agent and gave Federal officials details of how Cuban officials arranged the drug trafficking. "It was a fortuitous break; we had no idea who he was," Mr. Gregorie said.

Mr. Estebes told Federal officials and investigators from the New York State Senate's Select Committee on

Crime that he believed that about 3,000 other Cuban Government agents entered the United States as refugees in the emigration of Cubans from Mariel.

Mr. Estebes, the officials said, maintained that the agents had a variety of assignments, including drug trafficking, disrupting Cuban exile groups, and economic espionage.

Mr. Estebes was a principal witness for the prosecution at a trial in Federal District Court in Miami in February that ended in the conviction of five men accused of smuggling narcotics into Florida. The drugs, he testified, were brought by ships from Colombia to the small port of Paredon Grande on the north shore of Cuba in the Old Bahama Channel. There, the drugs were unloaded and transported in small boats to Florida.

No Means of Extradition

In the same case, four Cuban officials, including the commander of the Cuban Navy, Vice Adm. Aldo Santmaria Cuadrado, were indicted on conspiracy charges last Nov. 5. Since the United States has no diplomatic relations with Cuba, the Justice Department has no means to extradite the officials to stand trial.

Mr. Estebes, who is now being guarded in an undisclosed place by Federal agents, is expected to be given a new identity and placed in the Federal Witness Protection Program, Justice Department officials said. A spokesman for the department said Mr. Estebes may be a witness in other narcotics trials and therefore had declined to be interviewed.

Mr. Estebes is scheduled to testify at a public hearing in Manhattan tomorrow about drug trafficking in New York City and northern New Jersey.

The hearing, which has been called by Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, Republican of New York, and the State Senate Select Committee on Crime, will also review charges that the Cuban Government released thousands of people imprisoned for violent crimes and allowed them to enter the United States by boat from Mariel in 1980.

Federal Help Sought

The chairman of the crime committee, State Senator Ralph J. Marino, Republican of Oyster Bay, L.I., said one purpose of the hearing was to obtain Federal help for communities that have drug and other crime problems created by criminals who entered the United States as refugees in the emigration from Mariel.

New York City Police Department records show that from May 1980 through last December, people who are believed to have entered the country in the Mariel exodus have been arrested on charges of 6,288 felonies and misdemeanors. There are no accurate figures on how many of the Mariel refugees have been convicted of crimes in the United States.

Verne Jervis, a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service, said Cuba had refused to accept the return of Mariel refugees convicted of crimes in this country.

The hearing tomorrow will begin at 9:30 A.M. at the Federal Court of International Trade at 1 Federal Plaza.

Mr. Estebes was questioned in Miami through a Spanish-speaking interpreter by investigators from the crime committee on March 19. In a report to the committee, the investigators said Mr. Estebes told them that drugs obtained by Cuban agents in Florida were transported to dealers in New York City and to Newark, Elizabeth and Union City in New Jersey.

Concealed Compartments

According to the report, Mr. Estebes said heroin and other narcotics were shipped to the New York area inside vans with concealed compartments to hide the drugs.

"We have checked out Estebes's credibility with the Justice Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration, and they are satisfied he is telling the truth," said Senator Marino.

In accounts of his background, Mr. Estebes said he was born in Havana and had been trained as a naval mechanic. He said he was employed by the Special

Former Cuban agent details nation's gains from drug smuggling

By SARA RIMER
Herald Staff Writer

NEW YORK — The Cuban government has reaped millions of dollars by smuggling drugs into the United States through a network of 400 undercover agents, a Mariel refugee and former Cuban agent testified Tuesday.

Mario Estevez Gonzalez, 33, repeating much of his earlier testimony, said he personally turned over \$7 million from drug deals to officials of Cuba's Ministry of the Interior.

Estevez told the state Senate Select Committee on Crime that he was acting on behalf of the Cuban government along with 3,000 other agents who, he claimed, had come to this country on the Mariel-Key West boatlift.

There has been no public confirmation of this figure from the U.S. intelligence community. Last year, another congressional hearing heard claims that 300 so-called Cuban agents came to Miami during Mariel.

Estevez was a key government witness in February's conviction of five men on charges of conspiring with the Cuban government to smuggle drugs into Florida. Four high-ranking Cuban officials were indicted, but have not been brought to trial. Cuba has denied the allegations.

Bureau of Missions in the Cuban Ministry of the Interior when he was instructed in the spring of 1980 to enter the United States on a boat from Mariel. Records in the Community Relations Service of the Justice Department, which supervised the relocation of Cuban refugees, show that Mr. Esteves was released from a refugee camp at Fort Chaffee, Ark., on June 4, 1980. There is no record of when he arrived in the United States.

Mr. Gregorie, the assistant United States attorney, said Mr. Esteves's first assignment from Cuba's Ministry of the Interior was to join Alpha 66, an exile group, opposed to the Government of Fidel Castro. According to Mr. Gregorie, Mr. Esteves said he was directed to sabotage boats used by the group for missions to Cuba.

A Change in Assignment

Mr. Esteves said his assignment at Alpha 66 was soon changed, according to Mr. Gregorie.

Mr. Gregorie said Mr. Esteves indicated that in August 1980 he underwent a brief drugs training program in Cuba and returned to Florida with a list of contacts in the illegal narcotics trade. Before his arrest, Mr. Esteves said, he had access to speedboats and traveled frequently to and from Florida and Cuba, a distance of about 100 miles.

"He ran narcotics, and he was told to bring in as many drugs as possible," Mr. Gregorie said. "He said he told his sweaters in Cuba: 'I'm a good soldier. If that is what you want me to do, I will do it.'"

According to Mr. Gregorie, Mr. Esteves said he delivered between \$2 million and \$3 million in cash to his control officers at the Interior Ministry in Cuba.

A Narcotics Runner

Mr. Gregorie said it would be inaccurate to describe Mr. Esteves as a spy. "He was really a narcotics runner for the Cuban Government," Mr. Gregorie said. He said that when Mr. Esteves was asked by Federal investigators why he had admitted his role as an undercover agent, Mr. Esteves replied that "I am tired of helping Cuba do this — bring in drugs."

At the trial in February, Mr. Esteves testified that he saw Vice Admiral Santmaria give orders permitting the unloading of narcotics at Paredon Grande brought in by a reputed international narcotics trafficker, Jaime Guillot Lara. Mr. Guillot Lara, a Colombian, has been indicted on Federal drug charges and is a fugitive, according to the Justice Department.

The drugs, Mr. Esteves testified, were later smuggled into Florida.

These criminals make our street thugs look like Sunday school students.

Sen. Alfonso D'Amato

On Tuesday, Estevez elaborated on his earlier testimony, which described specific drug transactions, by detailing his knowledge of drug trafficking he said was officially sanctioned by the Cuban government.

He said 400 of the 3,000 Cuban agents who infiltrated the United States had orders to deal in drugs. The agents posed among the estimated 125,000 refugees who traveled to Florida by boat in 1980.

Estevez said he traveled between Cuba and Key West in a cigarret boat, using its pipes to conceal cocaine. He said he personally met with 30 New York buyers, who came to Miami to meet him.

Once, he said, he made a delivery himself to New York. And once, he said, he met with a buyer at New York's Studio 54 nightclub.

Estevez said he returned to Cuba two or three times a month to deliver money to Interior Ministry officials and to receive new drug ship-

ments from Colombia. He dealt with an official code-named "Lt. Col. Carlos," he said.

As he spoke, Estevez was concealed by a screen. His testimony was translated, somewhat loosely, by an interpreter. None of the law enforcement officials with him at the hearings offered any corroboration of his claims.

Estevez also claimed that Cuban Premier Fidel Castro had released 10,000 hardened, violent criminals to join the Mariel refugees. That a percentage of Mariel refugees were hardened criminals has been widely reported since the earliest days of the Mariel exodus.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R., N.Y.), committee chairman, said that if

other agents were as successful as Estevez in drug smuggling, Cuba may have received \$2 billion.

D'Amato, who is pushing for federal funds to build new prisons, called the testimony "absolutely shocking," and said, "These criminals make our street thugs look like Sunday school students."

But the senator also acknowledged, "In 1980, Fidel Castro sent over 125,000 Cubans to the U.S. Most of these Cubans were good, decent people who merely wished to escape the tyranny of Castro's Cuba."

Information from The Associated Press supplemented this report.

Other Titles in this series are:

U.S. Radio Broadcasting to Cuba: Policy Implications. A study of the proposal for a new U.S. government radio station for broadcasting to Cuba (Radio Marti), including discussion of the propaganda strategies of the Soviet Union and the Castro regime. Covers the information environment in Cuba and the impact of Radio Marti on it. Analyses options for administration and programming. Price: \$1.00

The Cuban Scene: Censors and Dissenters by Professor Carlos Ripoll. This article describes the mechanisms of intellectual repression under the Castro government. Outlines the history of the Cuban government policy toward literature since 1959, and of the effects of these policies on Cuban literature. Reprinted from *Partisan Review*, Vol. XLVIII, NO. 4. Distributed free of charge.

Castro and the Bankers: The Mortgaging of a Revolution by Ernesto F. Betancourt and Wilson P. Dizard III. An analysis of the Cuban government's debt to Western banks and the Soviet Union. Describes the sources and uses of the Castro regime's foreign debt, and discusses the consequences of a default or rescheduling. Price \$2.00

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