

AUDITORIUM

A Failed **Assassination**

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Ivón Deulofeu



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To Fidel, for his eternal life.
To my parents Aracelys and Francisco,
for showing me the way.
To my three As, Arianna, Alejandro
and Abelitín, for their dreams.
To the students and professor
of the University of Panama,
present and alive.
To those who aborted the crime.
To you, for contributing to peace.

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“FOR TRUTH ALL THE TRACES, EVEN THOSE THAT STAIN; THOSE OF THE MUD,
BUT FOR TRUTH, DEATH, BUT FOR TRUTH.”

Roque Dalton

At Bahía Honda, Cuba, there is a hill where an old lady feeds a goat while pigs bury their snouts in a container of slop, waiting for the old man that hangs his straw hat and offers recently picked guavas; they could be happy, but there is desolation.

A child runs with the freedom of his innocence.

Another child does not run, because he was not even born.

In Panama, on a hill called El Renacer, there is a jail where poor blacks do not mingle with rich whites, although all of them have attempted to kill.

Do not expect to read about the hills or the children, but about the guilty ones of so much desolation.

Ivón Deulofeu

For Truth, All the Traces

To leave a record of the facts left by our passage through life should be of interest for all generations.

I always wanted to write a book of joys, of good news, a novel and even chronicles of my hometown, from where have arisen stories that deserve to be answered.

How many times have I been inspired by the manner in which Cubans invent in order to resist hard times —inspired by legendary characters, by the customs of mountain people, by the nobility of peasants, by the heroic deeds of Cuban doctors in Guatemala and other parts of the world! Those stories bring happiness to existence because they allow the full enjoyment of the imagination that each second overflows and easily falls into paper. Yet, there is an urgency that prevents me from being distracted by such a book.

It happened that I was face to face with the man of whom I heard so much about in my childhood, and whose actions brought so much pain to my people. When his eyes met mine, an avalanche of recollections fell on my memory. I was in front of the white haired man with the somewhat disfigured mouth, the clever old man of the restless eyes who blushed as he listened in the courtroom of his record as a killer. It was not shame that rushed blood to his cheeks, but impotence for not being able to kill those who challenge him, as he was used to.

I was ten years old when my teacher told our fifth grade class the news about a Cuban plane that had crashed into the sea. I learned more when I reached home that same afternoon and my parents explained the tragedy to me. At that age, apparently the brain has

enough unused space, so that certain moments remain imprinted forever. Or perhaps pain has an eternal site.

Later on, and because of the constant training demanded of a journalist, I discovered that in that plane was Nancy, a young girl that like me had the privilege of being born in the land of those stories that deserve to be answered.

One day her parents left Bahía Honda, a municipality in Pinar del Río province, for the city of Havana, but it was not the trip they had planned to welcome the young champion. They came to Revolution Square and spent long hours crying in front of the photo of the daughter who never came back. This is one of the images seared on my brain: the faces of Nancy's parents and the unmistakable embrace of pain.

On the 25th anniversary of the terrorist act by which Nancy and her companions in the Cuban junior fencing team lost their lives, I wanted to tell the story. Research was difficult. The passage of time blurs the facts if they are not written at the proper time.

There are recounts about the bombing of the Cubana plane in Barbados, but I believe that everything could have been told in detail in a single book by interviewing prosecutors, material witnesses, investigators of the countries involved, and today the book itself would be another weapon against terrorism; thus the difficulties that I faced with my research in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. Many of those who had something to do with the case had passed away. Nevertheless, we were able to collect testimonials for what later became the documentary film *For Truth All the Traces*, like the namesake poem by Roque Dalton.

When one of the main perpetrators of the Cubana plane's bombing in Barbados attempted to blow up the University of Panama's Auditorium in November, 2000, in order to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro, I said to myself: "Now you have to write for others what you wanted to find about the Barbados bombing," a book that would tell *the story*.

And on that September 3, 2003, when Posada Carriles looked me in the eye, I swore by Nancy and by those who never came back, that *Auditorium* would be the complete story of a failed assassination.

So you will not find a book of joys, but the reason for so much sadness, a way of understanding how necessary it is to preserve the historic memory of the people. It does not matter how much danger

we must expose ourselves to in order to live the facts close up, if later on we know that we did something useful: telling the story.

I had never written a book, but one of the values of this one is the urgency with which it was written, because the denunciation must be urgent.

There is a friend who was a great help in making me respect the necessary descriptions: Antonio “El Loquillo” Gómez, a unique human being whose talent made interviews and everlasting images possible. I missed him at the Maritime Courtroom Building when I saw the great big close ups we lost and that were more powerful than a million words. He, as well as others, was not allowed inside with his Betacam SP. So contradictory, taking into account the repeated shots of the terrorists taken by others from El Renacer Penitentiary. There they were free to grant interviews to their own convenience.

To top it all, at the last hearing the courtroom’s windows were covered with gray paper to prevent cameramen from filming again, as they had done through minimal holes during the preliminary hearing, and which showed the nervous appearance of the notorious terrorists.

The main sources of the book are: part of the terrorists’ depositions at the No. 200 Hearing of the First Judicial Circuit of Panama; investigations by the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Panama, the Cuban and Panamanian intelligence services, the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Cuba, and our research in a two month period we spent in Panama. We also refer to special statements by President Fidel Castro and the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations. Data published by several communications media from Panama, Cuba, the United States and Venezuela, and Internet sites have also been used as sources.

Ivón Deulofeu
Havana, 2004

Society's Intransigent Commitment

With the greatest pleasure I write the preface of *Auditorium: A Failed Assassination*, by Cuban journalist Ivón Deulofeu, given that I was a member of the legal team that represented the plaintiffs against terrorists Luis Clemente Posada Carriles, Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez, Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, César Andrés Matamoros Chacón and José Manuel Hurtado Vivero,¹ for in the legal process against these terrorists we obtained a verdict of guilty and kept them in jail for almost 4 years. Nevertheless, the nefarious and submissive government of President Mireya Elisa Moscoso Rodríguez granted them a presidential pardon, on all counts unconstitutional, with the objective of ingratiating herself with the Cuban exiles residing in Miami, United States of America. In that respect, there is not the slightest doubt that these

¹ In Spanish speaking countries such as Cuba, people have two last names –the father's and the mother's maiden name, since a woman does not adopt her husband's name on marrying. Also many persons have more than one given name, but generally use only one in daily life. For these reasons, in English speaking countries sometimes it is wrongly believed that the last name a Hispanic inherits from his or her father is a middle name, and that the one adopted from his or her mother's is the last name. Thus to avoid confusion, the first time a character is mentioned in the book, his or her full official name is used, but from then on the second last name will be omitted most of the times, unless it is indispensable. In the case of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, both formulas are used ("Posada" alone, or "Posada Carriles"), for in both manners he is widely and indistinctively mentioned in international media. (All notes are by the translator.)

characters —whose criminal personalities are exposed by the author— are notorious international terrorists. Indeed, the facts of the assassination were fully proven, for said characters planned to assassinate the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, at the University of Panama's Auditorium, together with a large number of Panamanians that had gathered to welcome such an illustrious visitor to our highest academic institution.

It should be noted that the work we examine is undoubtedly a sociological study, dotted with legal considerations, about one of the most dangerous scourges of humanity in our time.

In the first place, it should be explained, as an introduction, that the term "terrorism" stems from the Latin "terrere" (frighten) or "deterere" (scare-off), which was amply used during the French Revolution. From France it passed on to England. Yet, the term "terrorism" was used for the first time in a legal framework in 1930, in Brussels, at the International Conference for the Unification of Criminal Law, although this type of criminal action had been already used as a political weapon in the 11th century in Persia (present Iran), where Hassan Ben Sabbah created in 1090 a secret society called "Hashishins", of which was a member the dissident sect of the Ishmaelites, one of the two largest warrior factions of Islam, with its main base of operations in the above mentioned country.

In second place, it is necessary to point out that there are many definitions of terrorism, and in that sense allow me to cite jurist Raymond Aaron, who described terrorist action as that "whose psychological effects are disproportionate to the single obtained physical result." Terrorism, therefore, has the following characteristics:

- a. it is unforeseeable and arbitrary;
- b. the victim has no means for avoiding the acts of force against him or her; and
- c. it is amoral, in the sense that it does not take into consideration any argument of a humanitarian character.

In the third place, we may point out that at international level the first convention for the prevention and repression against terrorism was reached in Geneva in 1937. The treaty defined "acts of terrorism" as those criminal acts that target a State and whose purpose or nature is to "provoke fear of certain persons or groups of persons or in the public."

Subsequently, in 1971, the Organization of American States (OAS) approved the Convention for the Prevention of Acts of Terrorism, which considered those acts as crimes (international crimes). In order to characterize the deed as a crime, the Convention considers irrelevant the ends for which they are committed. In effect, the Convention considers as crimes all attempts against the life or the physical integrity of persons to whom the State must give special protection according to International Public Law (for example, foreign heads of state, diplomats, et cetera).

Later on, in 1973, another similar convention was agreed in the framework of the United Nations Organization, in order to prevent and repress offenses against persons that benefit from international protection, including diplomatic agents. This Convention protects foreign heads of state, representatives, officials or important political figures, as well as local officials, private dwellings or means of transportation of the above mentioned persons.

In fourth place we should point out that the present work is divided in three (3) chapters that depict the criminal history of the above mentioned nefarious terrorists, from their illegal entry in Panama to the terrorist plans and their failure, thanks to the information supplied to Panamanian authorities by the President of the Republic of Cuba himself on arriving to the Republic of Panama on occasion of the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government, in November, 2000.

In fifth place, we should point out that in our time there is also terrorism sponsored by imperialist powers in an open and ostensible manner, in a war against humanity, against the ability of the people to determine their own future, to decide on their forms of government and when to change social and economic relations, in a space of freedom and participation of all citizens of the world.

In the face of war and terrorism, whether state-sponsored or private (all fundamentalists), society's intransigent commitment should be in favor of the recovery of politics and its re-signification: we must build ethical relations in which the difference is virtue and not a reason for criminalization. Thus we are in a time of controversy and definitions, of opportunities, of a historic-political-civilizing bifurcation. It is time for reconquering hopes and building utopias that point the way, and it is also the moment of being realists and struggle for the impossible, for those things that must be remade and rethought,

for recognizing each other and give to world economy and to the figures of assets in wealth its true social dimension.

Today we are—all us—the protagonists of History. September 11, 2001 and subsequent events all but remind us that power ends where dignity begins.

Chitré, Republic of Panama
September 8, 2005
Dr. Julio Elías Berríos Herrera

Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch. The 74th Passenger

José is feeding the hogs and with his other hand he holds the can with the slop. Elodia stares at him while she prepares a feeding bottle and screws on the nipple. She goes out looking for the newborn kid that refuses to feed from the mother goat's udder. Later on she offers guavas and asks us to sit down on the stools, unable to evade the conversation. José tells us about his family.

Elodia's and José's blue eyes can hardly be seen on their wrinkled faces. Their eyes are sad and occasionally moist. It is any day at the house of Nancy Uranga at Orozco, Pinar del Río. She was born in Cuatro Vientos, Bahía Honda, in a farming environment.

Elodia's and José's days were happy when they were surrounded by their sons and daughters, one of them Chachá, as Nancy was called, the second of five children.

Nancy was one of the members of the Cuban junior fencing team killed in the bombing of the Cubana Airlines plane in Barbados. From then on days were sad at the Uranga household, for happiness was snuffed out even for the other children.

"I told her, 'Nancy, why do you have to travel if you are on vacation?' and she said, 'Mom, how could I not go?'"

"I've lost part of my life. Being a father, I always remember her. She was so cheerful..."

Nancy was studying for her Biology degree at the University of Havana. At Bahía Honda's Museum there is one of her copybooks on display, also a fencing uniform and other belongings.

Shortly after getting married she left for Venezuela. She never tired of looking at the photos of the wedding.

I went to the Sports City and looked up her husband. He said to me:

“The first time the photos did not come out too good, so I had them printed again. When they were ready, she was already gone.”

The interview with her parents was on a Sunday at Bahía Honda. The mother said over and over:

“I wish she could have given us a grandson, but she hadn’t been able to have children. She was crazy about her two nephews, the children of my oldest daughter.”

“Would you have liked to raise Nancy’s child?”

“Of course. A grandchild would have made some difference.”

“Why?”

“Because I can’t have her, but I could have had the grandson.”

“What about you, José?”

“How could I not want to know my daughter’s sons? They are my blood.”

“Did you know that she was pregnant?”

“Well... we, I didn’t... neither did she, well she would have been the only one to know.”

That was the answer of the man that was her husband. He had just been told the news: Nancy had been pregnant. As a result of the research for the documentary on Barbados, the Cuban Ambassador to Venezuela in 1976, Norberto Hernández, had given the information:

“That girl talked of what she had to do after having her child, of the time that she had left before going back to training. She was thinking of the Olympics, how she would take part in the Games. And she was very much interested in doing her job as a mother and as an athlete. She began to feel the discomforts of pregnancy and we helped her here to endure them.”

The 74th passenger of the Cubana plane was the child growing inside the young champion.

The discomforts surprised her in Venezuela. Death devastated the first symptoms of life. Nobody knew it, because Nancy was bringing the news and her flight never reached its destination.

I did not want to sadden Elodia and José on that day I interviewed them, so I decided to telephone one of Nancy’s sisters. I couldn’t reach her and they found out when they saw the documen-

tary on Cuban TV. Later on, October 6, 2000 I saw José at Revolution Square. He gave me an emotional embrace.

The story went unpublished for 25 years, the same age that the desired grandson would have had.

Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch Ávila were the brains behind the criminal act. They recruited Venezuelans Freddy Lugo and Hernán Ricardo to bomb the plane in which 73 people were flying to Cuba, most of them members of the Cuban junior fencing team.

And that was what Posada Carriles would do to assassinate Fidel Castro: bombing the University of Panama's Auditorium and in the process killing thousands of students that had invited Commander Castro to a solidarity meeting.

Twenty five years after the Barbados terrorist act, they were ready to commit another crime, this time in Panama.

How was the Assassination Organized?

During the preparations for the Commander in Chief's possible visit to New York to attend the Millennium Summit in 2000, Cuban authorities discovered that the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) had begun preparations for a new assassination plot against President Castro. The US was excluded as a probable site, but Panama was mentioned as the most appropriate on the occasion of the 10th Iberian American Summit in November.

It was also known that CANF President José Francisco “Pepe” Hernández Calvo was in charge of organizing the operation and had asked a contribution of \$5,000 each from several top Foundation officials for covering expenses. There was information that some of the officials refused to contribute.

Pepe Hernández has been raising funds and organizing plans in the Foundation for this type of terrorist actions. US authorities that investigated another failed plot to assassinate the Cuban President in Margarita Island, Venezuela, in 1997, found that Hernández was the owner of one of the seized .50 caliber rifles, although strangely he was not indicted in the trial held in Puerto Rico.¹

Parallel to the fund raising, Pepe Hernández and Alberto Marcelino Hernández Hernández, another CANF influential official, traveled to Central America in early August to place in the hands of their “expert” Luis Posada Carriles the planning and execution of the assassination. It was not the first time that they had met with Posada Carriles to discuss the Foundation's terrorist plans and use him as a hit man.

¹ For details about this plot, see ahead in the chapter “The Cuban Denunciation”.

Posada demanded a large sum of money as payment for the operation, but the CANF officials considered it exorbitant. Nevertheless, they agreed on funding all expenses, such as buying weapons, travels, studies of possible manner of executing the deed, communications, house rentals and the actual assassins.

Once an agreement had been reached, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Alberto Hernández's bodyguard, was sent to El Salvador, Posada Carriles country of residence with the consent of Salvadoran authorities. Jiménez made the trip to polish details and give Posada the first \$8,000 dollars.

Jiménez's credentials for this type of work are first class –his friendship with Posada and his long record as a terrorist, including the murder of a Cuban expert of the Caribbean Shrimp Fishing Fleet, Artaignan Díaz Díaz, on July 23, 1976 in Mérida, Mexico.

Posada asked Jiménez for a meeting with notorious terrorist Antonio "Tony" Iglesias Pons, Santiago Alfredo Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá, Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez, among whom he said that he would select the assassination team.

Among the variants for the operation they planned to study the routes of the Cuban delegation in Panama, in order to select the place where they could blow it up with highly powerful explosives. If that option was not possible, they would pick a place where they could fire on the caravan with an antitank missile launcher, or at places where the Cuban leader would make public appearances.

According to records made available by Cuban State Security agencies, this MO for attempting against the life of the Commander in Chief is similar to the plot by Posada Carriles during the visit of the Cuban President to the Dominican Republic in 1998. On that occasion Posada was assisted by terrorists Ramón Francisco Font Saumell, Enrique Bassas Almeida and Luis Orlando Rodríguez Martínez, according to a report by *El Nuevo Herald* on August 9, 1998.

After returning to Miami, Jiménez told that Posada Carriles had more than 100 pounds of C-4, a very powerful explosive, kept for him by friends in several countries of the region, and that he also could easily obtain missile launchers, grenades, rifles and other weapons.

Posada Carriles, whose business is crime, decided to sell the explosives he had told Jiménez were in his possession, with the aim of increasing his revenues.

Jiménez was not the only one who visited Posada in El Salvador. Tony Iglesias arrived to hand over \$5,000 dollars from CANF and to accompany him to Honduras shopping for guns and explosives. At that time, both terrorists bought over 100 pounds of US manufactured plastic explosive C-4, several missile launchers and other means.

Likewise Pedro Remón, another terrorist whom Posada asked for, met with him in El Salvador and confirmed that the plan was quite advanced, for they had most of the weapons, the necessary explosives and a detailed study of the areas of interest in Panama City.

It is evident that the terrorists chosen by Posada as “direct executors of the action” had the necessary expertise and criminal record for the job.

Both Tony Iglesias and Pedro Remón were not simple messengers. Iglesias was part of the pirate attack on Boca de Samá, a fishing village at the former province of Oriente, which caused two deaths and four wounded among the civilian population. On November 25, 1979 in New Jersey, Pedro Remón murdered Cuban immigrant Eulalio José Negrín in the presence of Negrín’s son. The reason for the killing was that Negrín had gone to Cuba to attend a meeting of the Cuban Community Abroad with Cuban authorities. Subsequently, on September 11, 1980, Remón assassinated Cuban diplomat Félix García, a member of the Cuban Mission to the UN.

The other two chosen by Posada were Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Santiago Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá. They also have long criminal records. The former, among many other deeds, spent a few years in prison for his direct role in the murders of ex Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier and his secretary, US citizen Ronnie Moffit, on Washington’s Embassy Row. The latter participated in the planning of an infiltration mission in Cuba, at Cárdenas municipality, province of Matanzas, where three men that left US soil to carry out terrorists acts on social, sports, educational and productive facilities in Cuba were captured on December. 1991.

Jiménez, Iglesias and Remón traveled under their real names on direct Miami-San Salvador flights. Not many airlines fly this direct route, so it is easy to verify from passenger lists or through Salvadoran Immigration.

Between August and October 2000, Posada Carriles made CANF funded trips to Honduras, Costa Rica and Panamá under a false

identity. In Honduras he was a guest of his friends Rafael Hernández Nodarse and his son Joaquin Hernández Banegas, TV tycoons and notorious criminals and arms traffickers, as well as of Iván Gómez Melgarejo. In Costa Rica the Lora Hernández brothers have been his hosts. They represent the Foundation's interests in the country.

Rafael Hernández Nodarse lives on Fifth Avenue, between 25 and 26, Río Piedras, San Pedro Sula, and his son Joaquín Hernández Banegas at 56 Circunvalación, San Pedro Sula. Gómez Melgarejo resides at 3863 Second Street, Ciudad Nueva neighborhood, Tegucigalpa.

The Lora Hernández brothers work at Conansa in San José, Costa Rica, telephone number (506)-221-3638.

In Honduras Posada bought weapons, explosives and other means. In Costa Rica he received financial support and help for the smuggling into Panama of the armament by land.

In Panama he made the necessary study of the city, which was indispensable for the plan.

Besides the above mentioned terrorists of Cuban origin living in the US, Rubén Darío López Castro has been abreast of the preparations in his condition of consultant, and Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos contributed with the funding by sending Posada \$3,000.

López Castro has a long record of crimes and terrorist actions, such as the attack and sinking of a fishing boat in 1973, in which Cuban fisherman Luis Torna Mirabal was murdered. He has participated in the planning of pirate attacks on Cuban shores and in the failed assassination plot against Commander in Chief Fidel Castro on August 1998, in the Dominican Republic.

Castro Matos is an old sidekick of Posada in his terrorist plans since the time that both were officials of the Venezuelan DISIP (political police). Recently he has sought funding from the US government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for his allegedly "democratic and civil" organization Partido del Pueblo (People's Party), his cover for promoting domestic subversion and terrorist plans in Cuba.

All the facts are true and verifiable and there is enough evidence to prove the accusation made public in Panama.

Once again it has been demonstrated how the Cuban American National Foundation keeps on conspiring and plotting terrorist

actions at their quarters in the United States, and the freedom of movement of murderers such as Posada Carriles and other gangsters that live in Miami, who are not hunted down, tried and sentenced. It is unconceivable that organizations such as CANF can act with impunity and continue to promote their criminal actions.

From Costa Rica to Panama

On August 12, 2000, Posada Carriles, under the identity of Franco Rodríguez Mena, arrives at Tocumen Airport in Panama from Costa Rica on LacsA Airlines flight 625. He flies back to Costa Rica on the 13 from the same airport, on flight 624. There is no evidence of his presence there until October 14, when he returned to the Central American country. Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo had arrived the previous day, according to the Panamanian General Direction of Immigration's Regional Delegation of Paso Canoas.

Posada remained a few days, just enough to fine-tune the details of the operation. The purchase of explosives had been left to Gaspar Jiménez. He went back to El Salvador and returned to Costa Rica on October 24.

It was not the first time that he had transported men and weapons with criminal intent. In that country there are Cuban immigrants that have funded and harbored him for years, such as brothers Armando, Gustavo and Raúl Lora Hernández, born like Posada Carriles in the province of Cienfuegos.

On November 14 Guillermo Novo arrives in Costa Rica, and Pedro Crispín on the following day. Gaspar Jiménez was waiting for them at the Best Western Hotel. They do not meet Posada, who on November 3 enters Panama by the Costa Rican border, at the crossing point known as Paso Canoas.

In the region there are as many odors as strangers; many call it a no man's land and anybody can set up a stall and start selling. The gossip is about drug traffic, that the Moscoso administration wants

to ransack the Social Security funds, of the man detained in immigration, what is the latest fashion.

Luckily for cows that go back and forth, in Costa Rica there are no borer worms, if you are to believe a large billboard that reads, "Costa Rica, Territory Free Of Borer Worms". But those who use Paso Canoas are not so lucky, for unknowing to them they are exposed to terrorists who deal in explosives, like Posada Carriles and his men, who used the area to smuggle them to Jacú farm, José Valladares' house in Panama, six kilometers from the Costa Rican border.

Posada arrived in Panama City and checked in at Las Vegas Hotel on November 6. At 10:28 a.m. he paid cash for Room 215. Previously he had contacted another friend, drug dealer César Matamoros, a Cuban resident of Panama, white haired, middle aged, light skinned, and owner of the shop Botes Acuario.

On November 8 Matamoros asks his employee José Manuel "El Negro" Hurtado Vivero if he wanted to make some extra money driving for Posada Carriles. El Negro agreed and took a taxi to Las Vegas Hotel. Posada told him that he wanted to move, because he did not like the place. They went to Coral Suite Hotel, Posada asked for the rates and Hurtado drove him back to Las Vegas. That same day Posada moved to the Coral Suite and on the way he told the driver that they had to pick up a friend at the airport the next day.

On November 9 they went to Tocumen airport to pick his friend who lived in El Salvador, Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva, "Franco's young partner," as Matamoros called him, whom Posada had ordered to bring him some equipment to Panama. At the airport they rented a Mitsubishi Lancer, license plate 223251, from Dollar Rent-a-Car, to be returned on November 18. A clerk by the name of Gilberto José Góndola Pérez made out the contract. Of the \$400 invoice Posada paid \$200 in cash and Rodríguez Hamouzouva the other two hundred with a credit card.

Matamoros' house was the first stop, and later they went to have dinner at the Barca Dorada de Río Abajo, a restaurant close by.

Posada Carriles had already moved to the Coral Suite.

On Friday, November 10, Posada's friend tells Hurtado to take him to SERFRASA, where he had to get a business quotation. Subsequently they went to Gorgona, Matamoros' ranch, where they met

out of the driver's earshot. Afterwards they went back to Panama City, where Hamouzouva picked up his luggage and was driven to the airport.

On Saturday, November 11, Posada went to see a Mr. Carrillo. While they met, Hurtado talked with the maid. Later on the driver left Posada at the Coral Suite and went home.

On Sunday, November 12 they drove to El Rey supermarket, on Vía España, and to Arrocha Drugstore, both well-known stores in Panama that cater to better-off clients.

On the 13 they picked up Matamoros and went to El Chimborazo Restaurant, returned to Botes Acuario and Posada Carriles told Hurtado that on the following day they would drive to the province of Chiriquí, where he had to visit a friend. Posada did not tell him that his friend's name was Jose Valladares, known in the vicinity as Pepe el Cubano

Chiriquí is very green and friendly and lies to the west of Panama bordering with Costa Rica. The provincial capital is David, Panama third largest city. From Panama City to the Enrique Malek Airport in David there is a one hour flight. By car, the drive takes some six hours by the Inter American Highway. Travelers who want to be early in Chiriquí have to leave at midnight from Panama City, but the trip is scenic, going through the Bridge of the Americas over the Panama Canal, joining Central and South America. The farms on the highlands of Chiriquí are very attractive with houses that are reminding of Swiss architecture. One of the grandest views is the sunrise from the extinct Barú volcano.

In Chiriquí's central mountain range live the Guaymís, Panama's best known Indians after the San Blas Kunas.

On Tuesday, November 14 Posada chose to go by car. They left Panama City at 5 a.m., but on arriving Posada told Hurtado to stay at the hotel in David, for there was no room for him at his friend's home. Nevertheless, Valladares's house is very large and even has stables. Posada gave him \$50 and told him to get a room at Occidente Hotel, in downtown David. Subsequently he took a taxi to Jacú, located at Corregimiento de Aserrío de Gariché, Bugaba District, Province of Chiriquí. Guillermo Novo was already there.

At 9 p.m. Posada Carriles calls Hurtado and gives him the address of the farm, so they can meet there on the following day. On

Wednesday the 15th, at seven a.m. sharp, Hurtado leaves for Jacú, Valladares place of residence, only 6 kilometers from the Costa Rican border.

The farm is so deep set in the brush that it can be found only by following very detailed instructions.

Once again Hurtado is left out and sent to the kitchen.

In the afternoon Hurtado drives Posada and Guillermo Novo to the border. They have coffee near Costa Rican Customs. Hurtado went window shopping while Posada and Novo looked for Pedro Crispín and Gaspar Jiménez, who arrived to Panama at Coto 47, a small airport near the border with Costa Rica. They went into the brush and Remón took out a personal GPS and manipulated it for a moment. Next both of them take a taxi with their luggage and reach Paso Canoas business sector, go through Customs and join Posada Carriles and Novo. At one of the cafeterias they had more coffee, now with the newly arrived.

They placed their luggage in the Mitsubishi and drove to Jacú farm. Hurtado saw that one of them had a black handbag on his knees all the time. At Valladares's house they stayed for 45 minutes, discussing details of the Cuban president's assassination, during the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government.

On November 16 Posada Carriles, Pedro Crispín and Guillermo Novo left for the Enrique Malek Airport in David and boarded an Aeroperlas flight to Albrook Airport, Panama City. Remón hired a white Mitsubishi Gallant at National Car Rental up to November 18.

Hurtado went back to the farm and in the afternoon drove Gaspar Jiménez to the capital. At 11 p.m. they arrived to the Coral Suite, where Jiménez registered in the most expensive room. The driver parked the car at the hotel and went home.

On November 17 Hurtado returned to the hotel. Together with Guillermo Novo he went to Avis, near Los Manolos Restaurant, on Veneto Avenue, where he rented a black Mitsubishi Lancer, license plate 206065. Novo rented another Lancer, this one grey. Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, aka as Manuel Díaz, had already informed Hurtado that they would return the red car.

They picked up Matamoros and Jiménez in the grey Mitsubishi and went to El Chimborazo, a restaurant in downtown Panama City. It is the right moment for Jiménez to ask where the attending presi-

dents would stay and where they would meet, and agreed that after eating they would reconnoiter those places.

Subsequently they dropped off Matamoros and drove through Corredor Sur, a fast route. Passing Riande Airport, near the toll booth and besides the Belisario Porras School, they parked to observe the Atlapa Conventions Center and the César Park Hotel. Jiménez told Hurtado to drive slowly by. They reached the Atlapa Conventions Center and he told him that it is the place where the conference would take place and the nearby César Park where the heads of state would be staying.

Jiménez told Hurtado to drive closer to the hotel, but it was not possible due to security measures. They took 50 Street to find another entrance to the hotel, but were unable to, so they returned to Cincuentenario Avenue. Still following Jiménez's directions, Hurtado drove to the University of Panama, where according to Jiménez, "Fidel Castro would deliver a conference". The car stopped on Manuel Espinosa Batista Avenue; then in front of the Technological University of Panama; and once again at the National University, where they observed the buildings of the School of Law. They proceeded to the School of Architecture and to another building of the University's Central Campus, where they stopped for the last time by the Trans-Isthmus Highway to finally reconnoiter the Auditorium.

Subsequently they drove back to the Coral Suite.

When Hurtado following Posada Carriles' orders picked up the red Mitsubishi to take it to the car wash, he saw the black handbag which he always carried and that Gaspar Jiménez took to Panama City. He opened it and found some radios, a creamy dough-like mass, an extension lead and radio chargers. He went to see Matamoros, told him about the handbag and of the "weird things" he had seen. Matamoros ordered him to return it to the Cubans, because apparently they were mixed in strange things. He also tells him: "You better get rid of the handbag, because it could get us in trouble."

Hurtado went back to return it, but as he neared the hotel he saw the police was there. He drove by until he reached his mother's house, in the vicinity of Tocumen, and hid the handbag under the bed. Next day he went to his job at Matamoros' workshop, where he and his boss were arrested.

The black handbag had been behind the driver's seat. Hurtado did not have the keys to the red Mitsubishi, for Jiménez had driven the car the previous night and he had left by taxi. That was his statement to the Panamanian police.

Later on Hurtado remembered that when Gaspar arrived to the Coral Suite from Chiriquí he had a wheeled luggage, and on top of it the black handbag.

The assassination plot against Cuban President Fidel Castro was in its final stage; so was the Cuban intelligence operation for thwarting yet another attempt against Fidel.

Fidel's Arrival to Panama

On November 17, 2000, President of the State Council and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, arrived to Panama. At the airport he was welcomed by Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso.

Fidel greeted the many Panamanians at the airport and commented on how happy he was to be back. Fifty two years before as a young man he had tried to promote the creation of a student organization in Panama, and also visited a group of students who had been seriously wounded in a demonstration in favor of the return of the Canal to Panamanian sovereignty.

“Today all that has changed”, he said. “There are no foreign troops shooting students and Panama owns its Canal, manages it very well, is completely sovereign, gives service to the world and is in the best conditions to build its future.”

“Now it is the venue of the Tenth Iberian American Summit. I have not changed the ideas I had when I first came to Panama. I am more experienced and convinced than ever. That's the way it will be to the end of my life.”

Fidel thanked Cuba's friends for their warm welcome and added: “We will work together for the success of the Summit.”

The 10th Iberian American summit was officially inaugurated on Friday evening, November 17, 2000, at the Atlapa Convention Center.

On Saturday the 18th discussions were held on the situation of children and youth, and the attending heads of government signed the Declaration of Panama, under the slogan “United for Childhood and

Adolescence, the Base of Justice and Equity in the New Millennium”. The document stressed, among other solutions, “the need to prevent children from taking part in armed conflicts, favors the elimination of anti-personnel mines that each day cause hundreds of deaths.”

The Declaration of Panama reiterated the exhortation to the government of the United States to put an end to the Helms-Burton Law that intensifies the blockade against Cuba, and rejects the extraterritorial imposition of national laws or measures that violate international law.

The Summit ended on Sunday, November 19.

THE CUBAN DENUNCIATION

On the afternoon of November 17, in a press conference at the César Park Hotel, President Fidel Castro denounced the terrorist plans for an attempt on his life. Journalists from more than 30 local and foreign media were present.

“On arriving to this historic Latin American land of Panama, I wish to greet its patriotic and brave people, at present the legitimate owners of the Canal, which they manage better than the ones who previously had it under their rule. In the name of Cuba, which as the rest of the world benefits from its services, I thank you.

“I have come, as other Latin American heads of state, to attend the 10th Summit with the spirit to cooperate in its success for the benefit of our peoples, and particularly for the interests and prestige of Panama.

“Nevertheless, I feel obliged to inform you that, as on other occasions that I have attended these summits, terrorist elements organized, funded and led from United States soil by the National Cuban American Foundation, which is an instrument of imperialism and that country’s extreme right, have been sent to Panama with the purpose of assassinating me. They are already in this city and have brought weapons and explosives.

“I denounce it on arriving here and not before coming to Panama so that it cannot cross anyone’s mind that danger or threat could intimidate Cuba’s representatives.

“In relation to our delegation’s safety, it is not the least concerned. It is alerted, it is experienced and it is a veteran in the struggle against

ambushes, treacherous plots and other aggressions from the empire and its allies. But at this meeting there are numerous delegations and heads of state and governments, and although Panamanian authorities have taken great pains to guarantee the safety of all, we know that the terrorist elements have the idea of shooting or detonating explosives where they see fit to fulfill their purpose, independently of the collective vehicle used by heads or delegations or where they will meet for any of the scheduled meetings.

“The leader of these elements, to whom the Cuban American National Foundation gave the mission, is the infamous Luis Posada Carriles, a cowardly unscrupulous man, the mastermind of the bombing of the Cubana Airlines plane after it took off from Barbados with 73 passengers aboard, on October, 1976, carried out by Venezuelan mercenaries.

“After escaping from prison in Venezuela on August, 1985, he actively participated in the supplying of arms for the dirty war against the Nicaraguan government, an operation run by the White House and that resulted in the Iran-Contra scandal.

“He has been responsible of terrorist acts against hotels in Havana using mercenaries from El Salvador and Guatemala.

“At the 4th Summit held in Cartagena on June 14 and 15, 1994, they almost opened fire against us when we were touring the old section of the city in a caravan of horse-drawn carriages organized by the hosts. Sitting by me on the tour was Gabriel García Márquez. Had they been successful, I would have had the honor of dying together with such a lucid writer.

“The Cuban American National Foundation’s gang that planned the attempt at Isla Margarita at the time of the 7th Summit, held on November 8 and 9, 1997, was captured by the US Coast Guard, when their boat sailed by Puerto Rico, under the suspicion of drug smuggling; their weapons were impounded, including two semi-automatic .50 caliber rifles with infrared telescopic sights, and a range of 1,500 meters, which could be used day or night. As it is well known, the group’s members were found innocent in a spurious and fraudulent trial held in that colonized island.

“Posada Carriles arrived in Panama on November 5 with forged documents and undisguised. He has fully reliable accomplices in Panama that support him. Due to the above mentioned background, it was necessary to make this public denunciation.

“We believe this country’s authorities have the duty to track down the terrorist leader and his accomplices, prevent them from escaping by any air terminal, land or sea route, arrest them and try them in the appropriate court for violation of domestic and international laws.

“I am certain they will do their utmost to preserve the honor of the country and the success of the Summit, which have been put to risk by international criminals who have acted with outrageous disdain and mock of the authorities and people of Panama. Our delegation is ready to offer the information at its disposal.

“We likewise ask the cooperation of the Panamanian people to offer the authorities any clues that could contribute to the arrest of the terrorists. We are distributing to the press recent photographs of Posada Carriles with the request that they be published.

“We hope that in spite of these criminal plot, the Panama Summit will be a complete success.”

Fidel Castro Ruz

President of the Council of State and
Council of Ministers of the Republic Cuba

November 17, 2000

THE TERRORISTS ARE ARRESTED

On November 17, 2000, at 2:30 p.m., Jesús Escala Vázquez, chief of the Panamanian Judicial Technical Police’s Department of Criminal Investigations, received orders to check if at the Coral Suite Hotel there was a guest by the name of Franco Rodríguez Mena/ Luis Posada Carriles, who had been denounced in television by the President of Cuba Fidel Castro.

The police discovered that indeed Luis Posada Carriles, aka Franco Rodríguez Mena, together with Pedro Crispín Remón, was in Room 310. The room card disappeared since then. It was also found that Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Gaspar Jiménez were in Room 509. All four were arrested and the Security Division of the Judicial Technical Police searched both rooms.

Guillermo Novo and Pedro Crispín were arrested on the sidewalk in front of the hotel, while Posada and Jiménez were found in

the room. It was Guillermo Novo who went with Detective Rodolfo Osborne to Posada's room and opened the door with the keycard that had never been returned to the reception desk.

"We don't have to go, because the police are there", said a voice inside the room. It was Posada, who thought that Novo was alone.

In the room where Posada Carriles and Remón were staying, a handbag was found. Posada himself opened it. In the handbag there was a manuscript note that read: "Cuban Commandos Action and Justice Military Group (GMAJ), G= Gracia, M= Monzón, A= Arnaldo, J= Julio." The note mentioned that the plan to "achieve the prompt restitution of our country's freedom is named David vs. Goliath and we find our strength in the perfection of the law of God."

The proclamation had been drafted by Remón in Atlanta, Georgia, where he lives, before his trip to Costa Rica. He planned to make it public once the assassination had been successful. The author had titled the document "Cuban Commandos Action and Justice Military Group."

In the handbag there was a checkbook and a balance sheet in the name of Pedro Crispín Remón; tourism cards; a passport in the name of Guillermo Novo Sampoll, another one with Gaspar Jiménez's photo, but made out in the name of Manuel Díaz; one with Luis Posada Carriles' photograph, but in the name of Franco Rodríguez Mena, and Pedro Crispín Remón's. There was also an identity card to his name from the Best Western Hotel in Costa Rica, dated November 15.

A sketch was confiscated with notations like "AP" and "3.3"; paper sheets had the following names and phone numbers:

Raúl Rondón 226-3971, Carlos (home) 672-4220, Gambo 688-6004 Choco, 620-5559 César – Severiano 637 –1765, 225-7112, 265-6499 (besides the Word FAX), Roberto 618-4490, 230-3189.

Also a manuscript note:

"-OP- M.MONTADO-" "NOT CONFIRMED",
"HOTELS", "TRAVEL EXPENSES", "ONE WAY TICKETS",
"RETURN TICKETS",
"WALKIET",

DID YOU HAVE PROB IN DAVID?, "ZAP CAR", "CHOCO-\$",
"TNT \$", "KEY", "ADDRESS" "CÉSAR"- "RENT. DESPOSIT",
"PAY HOUSE RENT", "PAY HOUSE", "PAY HOTEL" 14-15-16
"_____". "PAINTINGS".

POSADA CARRILES CHEATS ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Panamanian National Police Commissioner Luis Alberto González Conté wrote in his investigative report that one of the arrested persons at the Coral Suite said his name was Franco Rodríguez Mena, but the photo on the Salvadoran passport did not correspond with the name.

The Panamanian Police's Information and Investigation Department sent a message to the Salvadoran National Civil Police and to the General Migration Direction on the matter of the records of Franco Rodríguez Mena, Posada Carriles' alleged name.

The head of the Family Register of El Salvador replaced Franco Rodríguez Mena birth certificate when Posada Carriles presented a certificate of baptism in which the parish priest of Tecapán declared that in the number 3 baptism register of the parish for the years 1923 to 1931 there is an inscription that says that "In Tecapán, on December 8, 1930, I baptized Franco Rodríguez de Mena, who was born on February 20, 1930 (...)"

Tecapán parish administrator Portillo Osorio declared that the baptism certificate in the name of Franco Rodríguez Mena is not valid, for the alleged Franco Rodríguez took advantage of the deceased Father Rafael Antonio Santos Martínez's good faith, who was the parish priest at the time. The inscription of the birth certificate was added on the upper margin of the register, which according to Catholic Church Canonical Law is prohibited.

Luis Posada Carriles had entered Panama with a forged document. His real date of birth was February 15, 1928.

GASPAR JIMÉNEZ WITH A FALSE PASSPORT

The attaché of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service at the United States embassy in Panama, John Mata, pointed out that the person with the name of Manuel Díaz, US passport number 044172940, was born in Puerto Rico on March 22, 1934.

A note by Consul General Peter E. Cozzens reads that after inquiries with the US Immigration and Naturalization Services, it was

known that Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, aka Manuel Díaz, is a US naturalized citizen. The note certifies that Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo is in possession of a forged passport in the name of Manuel Díaz.

CHOCOLATE GIVES THE TERRORISTS AWAY

On November 18, 2000, César Matamoros and José Manuel Hurtado, the latter known indistinctively as Choco (short for Chocolate) and El Negro, on account of his dark skin, are arrested as they were leaving Botes Acuario. Matamoros was Posada's friend and Hurtado his driver in Panama.

Hurtado, who had hidden the handbag under the bed at his mother's house in Tocumen, declared that afterwards his nephew Francisco Arrocha took the handbag with the explosives out of the house. Hurtado's mother did not want it there, because "it belonged to the Cubans."

Arrocha took the handbag to the home of his aunt Luz Ermila Murillo, who finally asked neighbor Concepción Figueroa Rojas to throw it away or "whatever". He said that he would bury it, which he did. In an empty lot in the outskirts of the city, by El Sobrino building materials plant, and near a coconut tree, the nephew dug a hole for the black handbag.

Police Inspector Ignacio Taylor asked the detainees at the Coral Suite about the red Mitsubishi which Hurtado had been driving, and where the explosives and other materials to build the bomb had been. The detainees answered "they knew nothing about it." Inspector Taylor declared that the detainees "initially said that they were in Panama to demonstrate against the President of Cuba Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, but when they saw the security measures they decided to go shopping. Asked what type of demonstrations "they did not answer, nor did they refer what they bought."

MILITARY-ISSUED EXPLOSIVES

Captain Feliciano Benítez of the Panamanian Police, guided by Concepción Figueroa, found the handbag. He described it in the

following manner: it has a “logo of a white swordfish in aqua green”, a phrase that says “the Dolphins’ fifth season” in white with aqua green, and the number 5th. On the other side it can be read “Season”, and in black with a white background “The Miami Herald” and the word “Marlins” in an aqua background. In the handbag were 5 Hummin marine band VHF radios, yellow with a grey base, their respective antennae, a Futaba remote control system, model Skysport 4 of 72.10 MHZ, with a plate inside that reads: FCCID: AZAPT4VF-72, Futaba, Made in Taiwan. With the antennae, 5 black chargers, one of them with the name Futaba, E124311 series, Model FBC-8B (4); a power source with two Duracell lithium batteries; a small case with a clasp; 10 plastic wrappings with a cream colored mass described in the following manner: 1 wrapping with vertical red and white stripes holding 8 pieces of a yellowish mass in an irregular and round shape; 5 transparent plastic bags hermetically sealed, with the words “Ziploc”, containing a cream colored doughy material; 2 plastic bags with a logo on a green and red background, the phrase “Auto Frequent”. Inside the letters AM in red and green, respectively, the phrase “Auto Market” in green enclosed in a circle.

In the bags there is a creamy mass, a plastic bag with white background, three paint brushes and a paste. In a white circle with orange lettering, the word “Talem”, and in sky blue letters on a yellow background “Artists’ Materials” containing the cream colored paste; 1 ACP surge protector with 7 sockets, its Z97090211107 series line, a black plastic box with cables coming out, on one end red and black, on the other black and red. On another side cables are white with a plug, and on the lid a small red light and a white button. Panamanian experts identified this last device as a firing system.

Officers Trinidad Madrid Rodríguez, Ricardo Alberto Cárdenas Núñez and Roger Rufino Jaén Cano, from the Panamanian National Police’s Explosives Unit, witnessed the discovery of the black handbag. They said that it had been buried in a sisal sack, covered with two black plastic bags. They saw that the components of the device were apart; the explosives had not been prepared, there were no detonators, the energy source was apart. Only the firing system with its mechanism was armed. The remote control and the radios did not have the antennae connected.

The explosives experts pointed out that the plastic explosive they found is a very powerful one called C-4 (military issue). They ex-

plained that “it has the ability to destroy any armored car, buildings, steel doors, and that the shock wave from this explosive has a range of two hundred meters.” They claim that at that distance “it would affect a human being’s senses and would cause internal bleeding, and if someone were in the center of the explosion, inside an armored car, the person would not survive.”

The Explosives Unit officers said the “destructive capacity of this material is total, and it is not sold commercially, but is of military issue.” They pointed out that “the people that made what was found are experts, and the explosive device could be detonated from a distance by remote control whenever that person decides, unseen, and the range of the transmitter depends on artificial and natural interference, the weather and where the antenna used by the receiver is located.” Finally they said that “the components found are to make a bomb.”

The conclusive report on November 23, 2000 by the Forensic Chemistry Unit of the Panamanian Judicial Technical Police’s Crime Scene Department established “the presence in the samples of explosives C-4, PETN (pentaerythritol tetranitrate, also known as pentrite) and RDX (cyclotrimethylenetrinitramine, also known as T-4).”

Detective Julio Macías Añino, an explosives expert, after describing their composition said that they were in perfect condition and fully functional. He said “that the person who armed it did it thoroughly and ingeniously, it took him time and dedication, with much knowledge. He is an experienced professional and takes his job seriously.”

In the black bag they found two towels –one white with black, yellow and chocolate colored dots, and another one also white, but with grey and chocolate dots and a label that said “Tuesday, Made in USA”, with a drawing in blue.

The Forensic Chemistry Unit of the Panamanian Judicial Technical Police’s Crime Scene Department detected in the towel traces of PETN and RDX, plastic explosives of military issue. The conclusion was that the towels were used to mix the explosive materials.

The range of both the transmitter and the receiver was 1 kilometer. The experts made tests with the explosives using the radio control. The detonation was effective.

Panamanian forensic chemists Jorge Sebastián Batista Domínguez and José Isabel Ortega García reported that the amount

of the explosives was 30.34 lbs. of C-4, and 3.1 lbs. of RDX and PETN.

The two bags that contained the explosives had the following printed words:

“WARNING: This is not a toy. To avoid the danger of suffocation keep this plastic bag away from babies and children. Do not use in cribs, beds, baby carriages and playpens.

Do not leave your children alone in places such as banks, supermarkets, stores, etc. Children frequently disappear in Costa Rica.”

Also in fine print there is the name of Costa Rica, Panama’s neighboring country and place of origin of the terrorists.

THE TERRORISTS REFUSE TO SUBMIT TO DNA TESTS

Traces of paint, synthetic fibers and hairs were found in the PETN and RDX explosives. Eybar Castillo, head of forensic analysis at the Institute of Forensic Medicine of the Prosecutor’s Office of Panama performed chemical tests and found “fibers of a synthetic source”, “hairs of a human source”, and “hairs of an animal source.”

Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez, Guillermo Novo and Pedro Crispín refused to submit to DNA testing, which is mandatory in Panama according to Law No. 80 of November 23, 1998.

DNA analysis would have been done on hairs and blood samples from the accused.

The terrorists were taken to the Institute of Forensic Medicine for collecting the samples. They were told about the mandatory character of the test, but they said they would not allow such analysis, stressing that “they would not allow the technician or anybody else to touch them.” The four refused to sign any legal documents on the matter.

The test were performed only on those who were not near the explosives—Valladares, Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva, Hurtado and César Matamoros.

It was to be expected that Posada Carriles would not submit to the test, for the hairs found in the handbag were his in all probability, because he was the one who manipulated the explosives. One of the Panamanian experts declared that the bombs had been handled by an expert, and Posada was the most expert of all four. Bear also in mind Posada's own declarations about his training in that sense, and that the explosives were found in the black handbag that he always carried.

US EMBASSY IN PANAMA ISSUES THE TERRORISTS' POLICE RECORDS

Through note No. 2-PC-0 of August 14, 2001 the police records of detainees Luis Faustino Clemente Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena), Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo (aka Manuel Díaz), Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Pedro Crispín Remón were included in the case file.

The information reads as follows:

“Luis Posada Carriles, born on February 15, 1928. Posada was arrested on June 15, 1961 for violation of immigration laws; Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo (aka Manuel Díaz), born October 6, 1935.

“Jiménez was arrested several times for violation of immigration laws. In 1976 he was arrested for the kidnapping attempt of the Cuban Counselor in Nuevo Laredo, México.

“Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez, born on September 13, 1944. Remón was arrested in 1982 for transporting explosives and was sentenced to five years in a federal prison. In 1986 he was arrested for attempting to kill a foreign officer and other violations. He was sentenced to twelve years in a federal prison. He was released in 1990 for medical reasons.”

“Guillermo Novo Sampoll, born on June 8, 1939, has been arrested several times between 1964 and 1981 for crimes of violence. He was sentenced at least two times and has spent some years in prison.”

The document sent by the Embassy of the United States in Panama reports that detainees César Andrés Matamoros Chacón, José Valladares, and Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva have no police record in the United States. In the case of Roberto Miguel Carrillo Grande there was no search of police records, for the date of birth was not made available.

The No. 2-PC-0 note was annexed to the police records from the US Federal Bureau of Investigations. All documents were in English and subsequently translated.

Case No. 200 presented by the First Office of the Prosecutor of the First Judicial Circuit of Panama reads the following description according to the FBI's record:

Luis Posada Carriles, aka Franco Rodríguez Mena, has a case of "Arrested or Received", on "6-15-1961" by the Immigration Agency of the United States, Agency case number "AI2419708", charged with "Violation of Immigration Laws".

Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo, aka Manuel Díaz, has the following aliases: Jiménez, Gaspar Eugenio; Jiménez, Gaspar; Jiménez Escobedo, Gaspar E.; Jiménez, Gaspar Eugenio; and Jiménez Escobedo, Gaspar E.

According to information delivered by the FBI to Panamanian investigators, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo has the following police record: "Arrested or Received" on 6-9-1958 by the United States Immigration Service, case number "A11260264M". He was deported back to Cuba. Name he used: Jiménez Escobedo, Casper E., charged with Deportation. Sentence: "Deportation from Miami to Cuba in a private plane on his own (expenses paid by him). "Arrested or Received" on 3-15-1961 by the United States Immigration Service, case number "A11260264", charged with "Violation of Immigration Laws, sentence, "adjusted state under 89-732 A Permanent 7-7-67". "Arrested or Received", on 7-28-1976 by Federal Judicial Police, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Name used: "Jiménez-Escobedo, Gaspar E. Charged with "Attempted kidnapping of Cuban Consul."

Also on record: Case number "V-139872", from "Immigration Headquarters, Washington, 10-1957". Name used: "Jiménez, Gaspar Eugenio, case number "A11260264", United States Immigration Office, Miami", on "6-7-1967". Name used: "Jiménez Escobedo, Gaspar E."

Case Number "A1126264", of the "US Immigration Office, Miami, on 2-20-1974. Name used: "Jiménez Gaspar Eugenio." Case number "W8714570", of the "Secretary of State. Division of Licenses, Tallahassee." Name used: "Jiménez Gaspar Eugenio."

Pedro Crispín Remón is on record with the following aliases: Remón, Pedro; Remón Pete; Remón Pedro Crispen, and Remón Peter.

He has the following record:

"Arrested or Received," on "2-10-1982" by US Marshall, charged with "Illegal Inter-state transportation of explosives", case number 10645. Name used: "Remón Pedro Crispen", sentenced to 5 years; "Arrested or Received", on "02-10-1982", FBI Office, North Miami. Name used: Remón Pedro Crispen. Charged with "Interstate Illegal Transportation and Reception of Explosives". Sentenced to five years. "Arrested or Received" on "02-10-1982". Name used: Remón Pedro Crispen. Charged with Interstate Illegal Transportation and Reception of Explosives."

"Arrested or Received on "10-22-1984", Petersburg Federal Correctional Institution", case number 10645-004. Name used: Remón Pedro, charged with criminal contempt. For these two charges the record shows a sentence of 5 years. It also shows: "Arrested or Received" on "10-29-1986", Terre Haute United States Prison, Case number 10645-004, charged with 1) "Criminal contempt"; 2) "Conspiracy to Murder and Attempted Murder of a Foreign Officer"; 3) "Conspiracy to Commit Crimes Against the United States." For these charges he was sentenced to 12 years and 26 days in prison.

"Arrested or Received" on "09-24-1980", case number 4398, Bell Villesex Police Department. Charged with "Possession of Stolen Goods"; "Illegal Possession, Attempted Aggravating Theft"; and "Aggravating Theft, Possession of Tools". Sent to District Attorney. Charge: NJ2C: 39-5B, "Possession of Weapons." Sent to District Attorney. Charge: NJ2C: 5-1. "Attempted Auto Theft". Sent to District Attorney. Charge: NJ2C: 5-5. "Aggravated Theft. Possession of Tools." Sent to District Attorney. Charge: NJ2C: 20-7. "Possession of Stolen Goods."

Guillermo Novo Sampoll is on record with the following aliases: Novo Bill; Novo Guillermo; Sampol Bill Novo; Sampol Guillermo Novo; Barbour James Matthew; Nova Guillermo; Novo Gill, Novo-Sampoll Guillermo; Sampol Guillermo; and Triquero Víctor.

According to the FBI, Guillermo Novo Sampoll has the following record:

“Arrested or Received” on 12-22-1964”, New York Police Department, case number B597248, charged with 1) “Terminate Life with the Placing of Explosives Near a Building”; 2) “Attempt to Damage a Building”; 3) “Conspiracy”. “Arrested or Received” on 5-20-1969, US Marshall, Newark, case number 56-30, charged with 1) “Conspiracy for Violating Neutrality Act.” “Arrested or Received” on “5-20-1969” New York Women’s Metropolitan Correctional Center, case number 39911. Name used: Novo Sampoll Guillermo, charged with 1) “Conspiracy for Damaging Government Property.” “Arrested or Received”, on 5-20-1969, FBI Office, Newark, charged with “Fraudulent Injury.” “Arrested or Received” on “02-18-1972”, US Marshall, Newark, charged with 1) “Conspiracy for Damaging Property of Foreign Government”; 2) “Violation of Neutrality Act”; 3) “Conspiracy.” Sentenced by the Court: “Conspiracy for Damaging Property of Foreign Government, 3 years, two years and six months. Sentence suspended and 5 years probation. “Arrested or Received” on 1-23-1974, New York Metropolitan Women’s Correction Center, case number 80125158. Name used: Novo Sampoll Guillermo, charged with 1) “Damage and Destruction of Government Property. Sentenced to 3 years and six months. “Arrested or Received” on 1-29-1974, Danbury Federal Correction Institution. Case number 80134. Name used: Barbour James Matthew. Charged with “Interstate Transportation of Stolen Goods”. Sentenced to 3 years of prison in New Jersey, by Fisher. “Arrested or Received” on “8-10-1981”, Danbury Federal Correction Institution, case number 80125-158. Name used: Sampol Guillermo, charged with “Perjury”; sentenced to 54 months.

THE GREAT CONFESSION

When Pepe el Cubano was asked about his role in the events he said:

“They came to my home, slept in my home, used my home’s bathrooms. They are my friends and will be my friends; they are my brothers. All the revolutionary years that we have lived since Miami. I wasn’t going to participate because I have no legs and I can’t walk.”

He did not believe it himself, for to the question of who brought the detonator into the country, and the day and time of the deed, he answered:

“I don’t know. My opinion was to kill him, but not in that manner, because Kennedy was killed with a rifle with a telescopic sight, and only one man, and I said that if they had brought some rifles with telescopic sights they would have killed him and we wouldn’t be in trouble right now.”

Subsequently he said that “he meant Fidel Castro.”

Valladares told investigators that in 1963 he joined the US Army. He claimed that from 1963 to 1964 he was in a guerrilla and frogmen training camp in Puerto Cabezas¹ and ordered to land in Cuba and kill Fidel Castro.

According to Valladares, he’d only met Pedro Remón when he had been at his home in November, and assured they were brothers and that he was in jail for “killing that son of a bitch of Fidel Castro.”

When he told investigators of his expertise, training and courses he said:

“Only the one at the school. I didn’t go to the academy to bomb, nor for killing, nor to set fires. I was in all of Fidel’s revolutions and I learned everything there. I killed people, I set fires, I placed bombs. I was a guerrilla in the mountains twice, I was a lieutenant in the US Army, I was a police sergeant in Cuba from March, 1959 to November, 1960, I was with the CIA in Nicaragua, where I was paid. I was training in Guatemala.”

“I was a stevedore in a warehouse, loading sacks of sugar, and then I placed a bomb in a trash bin and it went off, but nothing happened.”

The great confession of José Valladares, aka Pepe el Cubano, and Long Pepe, did not end there. When investigators asked him if he had handled explosives he answered:

“No, not here, but during my life I’ve handled enough of the stuff.”

It is said that Pepe died of natural causes after the interrogations, but many doubt it. His statement left little to the imagination about

¹ Puerto Cabezas is located in Nicaragua. On 1961 it was the point of departure for the CIA-funded and trained invasion force that landed on Bay of Pigs, Cuba, where it was defeated in less than 72 hours.

the real intention: to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro. The mafia itself would have liked to eliminate him. Is he really dead? The question would not go unanswered.

One morning we left for the province of Chiriquí. At the hearing we had learned Pepe el Cubano's address.

A highway led us to a forced turn. To ask about José Valladares is to draw blank stares. "Pepe el Cubano", I said, and a man who drove a water wagon pointed to several paths.

"One of them will take you to Pepe's house", he said.

We drove through deserted places until we thought we were lost. More than once we were almost stuck, and water puddles, mud and dense vegetation disoriented us. Suddenly a young man in a bicycle answered our query.

"Could you please direct us to Pepe el Cubano's?"

"I don't know where that is," he answered unsure of himself.

"Thank you."

Two kilometers later we arrived to the house where the terrorists had been and hidden the explosives.

One of Pepe's men was sweeping the lawn. He was Virgilio, a very humble man with a straw hat and rubber boots. He greeted us.

"Is this the house of Pepe el Cubano?"

"Yes."

"Is he home?"

"The boss died a year ago."

"Who lives here?"

"No one. His sons living in Miami took everything away and the house is shut. A friend of his that lives in town takes care of it.

"We are journalists and we would like to film in the house and talk with you, if it's OK."

"Are you from Miami?"

"We are journalists and we would like to know if you met his friends that are detained, and that were here when Fidel came to Panama."

"Oh, yes, they were here, but I wasn't. They stayed in the house."

"How do you know, then?"

"The boss told me."

"Will you show us the house?"

Jacú farm looks like a movie set. A stone wall with rails, tire rims and other embedded iron pieces attract attention. The house is big,

set in several acres, with many rooms, a parking space for several cars, a cellar, and stables.

“Who built the house?”

“The boss and someone named Orlando.”

“Orlando Bosch?”

“I don’t know his last name.”

“Did the police come here?”

“Yes, several times they took him, and he was mad.”

“Is he dead?”

“Sure, he died on October 4, 2002.

“How did he die?”

“I found him dead in bed. His lungs were full of water. I told him over and over that he should see a doctor, but he wouldn’t go. He was always short of breath.

“Where was he buried?”

“At Bugaba Cemetery, nearby.

“Had he lost a leg?”

“Yes, by the ankle.”

While we were talking to Virgilio we saw the young man in the bicycle who had told us he did not know the address. He was passing in front of the house as if he were checking on the visitors. While we were saying goodbye and leaving for the cemetery, suddenly a white van appeared on the road. I was sure that the young man had warned the friend in town who takes care of the house of our presence. Both vans passed each other in silence.

We hurried to the cemetery trying to get there before the rain beat us to it. We left behind the Jacú farm and the house through which the Panama-Costa Rica border can be reached. Its strategic location was not accidental, but one of the requisites for the profession of terrorist. It is one of the many hideouts to evade justice.

The rain arrived before us to the Bugaba Cemetery, a holy ground for the dead that did not have much in life. We could not believe that Pepe’s grave would be there. His home had nothing to do with this place.

“Do you work here?”

“Yes.”

“We are looking for Pepe el Cubano’s grave.”

“Are you relatives?”

“No, we just want to film his resting place.”

“I helped to find a place to bury him, because when he died there was no room. Come with me.”

A few ceramic tiles form Pepe’s tomb. On top, the coat of arms of the Republic of Cuba, a real insult to Cuban symbols. They belong to those that truly love their Fatherland, whether they live there or abroad, but not to a terrorist who always affronted it.

We took some pictures of the grave, not really believing he was dead. He made the great confession and the mafia settles its accounts.

The cemetery’s watchman said goodbye, and he talked about the deceased with pain. His face changed when we thanked him for taking us to the terrorist’s grave.

Pedro Crispín Remón. September 11 Terrorist in New York

“He was at a party with the children of the Mission. Having no children of his own he was very close to all the boys, as he was with mine. After the party he left, and the assassination took place a few blocks from the Mission. Pedro Remón shot him with a submachine gun in the head and the neck. He lost control of the car and crashed on the sidewalk, on the opposite side of the street. He was already dead.”

Domingo can't still believe his brother's death. The assassination took place on September 11, 1980, twenty years before the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. But those terrorists are not on the lists of the Most Wanted although they are guilty of the death of Félix García Rodríguez, the only United Nations diplomat that has been assassinated.

Pedro Crispín pulled the trigger. It was a hit by the Omega 7 terrorist group, founded to operate on US territory. Its leader Eduardo Arocena told the FBI that Remón had been the assassin. Cuban terrorists Andrés García and Eduardo Losada also took part in the hit.

According to a declassified FBI document, “the original plan was to assassinate four people from the Cuba UN Mission. Arocena, Remón, Andrés García and Eduardo Losada were all involved in the stalking and assassination.

“Pedro Remón made the call to New York news media claiming the assassination in the name of Omega 7.”

A year before, on November 25, 1979, Omega 7 had also assassinated Cuban immigrant Eulalio José Negrín Santos.

The same FBI document says that “the MAC 10 submachine gun used to kill Negrín was the same weapon used to kill Félix García. The MAC 10 submachine gun was under Pedro Remón’s control and was given to him by Arocena.”

”Arocena knew and ordered the operation... He was subsequently informed by Pedro Remón and Andrés García that the operation had been successful and that Remón had been the hit man.”

Cuban immigrant Eulalio José Negrín Santos led the office of the Cuban Program in New Jersey. Through it he promoted family reunion and the lifting of US economic sanctions against Cuba. For that reason he was assassinated in front of his 12 year old son, Richard. Deyanira and Félix, his sister and his brother told me that a bullet hit his jugular vein and another one his chest.

“All my life I have needed my brother. That can’t be measured in terms of a fixed period of time, And even more than I, his children have needed him.”

“He received several threats in letters with the Omega 7 logo.”

Deyanira shows me one of them sent by Negrín. It reads:

“So that you can remember your friends. Yours truly, Omega 7.”
“You have one month and 5 days left.”

Deyanira treasures the photos and her brother’s last memories. She tells me that his US friends called him “El Guajiro” Negrín.¹

“He was harassed with telephone calls late at night and he could hear a clock ticking, as if it were a time bomb.

“Once he told me that he had asked for police protection, but that they gave him evasive answers. Before being killed, he was psychologically tortured.

“His Union City office was bombed. He came to Cuba four times, and in his last trip he left a photo and his testament to the Cuban government. He was convinced that he was going to be killed. ‘Don’t leave, brother’, I told him. And he said, ‘Sister, my work is over there... You have to be the master of your own home to live there.’”

Deyanira remembers that when Eulalio returned to the US, she bought a plot in the cemetery and reserved a coffin at Rivero Funeral Home.

¹ Spanish for “peasant”. Although sometimes it can be used in a pejorative manner (in the sense of “yokel” or “hick”), used as a nickname is a term of endearment.

On November 25, 1979, “El Guajiro” Negrín was shot to death at 711 10th St., Union City. His 12 year old son witnessed the crime. It was a Sunday morning, at 9:50 a.m. The boy ran to his father and took his head in his hands. Negrín stared at him.

The main assassin, Pedro Crispín, was using a black mask when he fired his gun.

At present, at El Renacer Prison in Panama, he hopes to confuse us all. He believes that because he is not wearing the mask he has erased his life. But even FBI declassified documents tell his story, and his fiancée at the time, Nelly Monzón, told the authorities that Pedro was hurt because news media had not covered the crime as he had expected.

Pedro Crispín’s two terrorist acts —the assassinations of Cuban diplomat Félix García and émigré Eulalio Negrín—have gone unpunished. Panama could have been another successful chapter in the life of this hired assassin if the Cuban denunciation had not been as timely.

Extradition Process

On the evening of November 18, 2000, Fidel and the rest of the Cuban delegation visited the University of Panama. The university's Auditorium would be the venue of a solidarity meeting. Thousands of people were attending. Many held flags of both countries, others signs that read "Long Live Cuba," "Long Live Fidel." All applauded the leader of the Cuban revolution while chanting, "Fidel, Fidel."

While at the University, Fidel ordered the start of the extradition process. Finally a diplomatic note with a request for the extradition of the arrested terrorists to Cuba was delivered to Panamanian Foreign Minister José Miguel Alemán. The note detailed the legal reasons and the demand that under no circumstance they were to be released.

Around 11 p.m. on November 18, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque delivered to the Vice Minister in charge of Panamanian Foreign Relations a letter in which he explained the reasons Cuba had to request extradition. Thus the official procedure to try the terrorists in a Cuban court of law had begun.

On the morning of November 20, Minister Pérez Roque called his Panamanian counterpart and repeated in person the content of the diplomatic note delivered the previous day, and the request to keep the terrorists under arrest.

On that same day, the Cuban Ambassador in Panama delivered a second note to the Panamanian Foreign Ministry requesting to transmit to the government, among other aspects, that the Cuban government "had been able to find that that the person that is men-

tioned in the Note by the name of Manuel Díaz is in fact the notorious Cuban born terrorist Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo.”

The assassination plot against Fidel had an international outreach, due to the countries involved in the different planning stages, the terrorists’ places of residence and the venue itself. In an interview with Cuban Ambassador in Panama Carlos Zamora he told me:

“That international aspect of the (assassination) plot was indeed a very complex element for judging and detailing it. Take notice that when Fidel talks about extraditing them, he suggests the possibility of an international court of law to try them, not just a Cuban court, because there were several countries involved. The United States, where the plan begins in Miami, the source of the money, and from where the elements that took part in it also came from; several Central American countries, and Panama, where the assassination would take place. Therefore, there were several possibilities from the point of view of the trial, of the crime of assassination that would have taken place.

“They could have been tried in Cuba because they were Cubans. The main actors were persons with a record and a number of deeds against our country and that were going to attempt the assassination of the President of Cuba.

“The other country that could try them was Panama, for the terrorist act would have taken place here, and therefore where what they had been plotting would have happened.

“The territory of other countries had been used, shall we say, in a collateral manner, to get explosives, to obtain support, to smuggle them through. There were violations and crimes in those countries, and of course, there was a conspiracy in those countries for the assassination. Therefore, we had the right to try them for what they were going to do here in Panama.

“According to what lawyers have told me, there is a principle in Criminal Law that territoriality where the crime is committed is key for deciding where the trial should take place, and Panama and its authorities promised the international community and its own country, due to the seriousness of the event that would have taken place here, to try those persons. According to Panama’s own laws and to those principles of Criminal Law, they had the right to try them. Such was Panama’s decision, as a sovereign act and the right of territoriality, to try those persons.

“Mr. Ambassador, does Cuba also have that sovereign right to try them for that crime?”

“We also have that sovereign right to try them, and we certainly have not ceded our ability and our sovereign right to do so, whether for that crime or for any others they have committed against our country; therefore, we reserve that right, thinking how would that trial be here and what could happen.

“What could happen?”

“They could be found not guilty; they could be set free, they can escape from jail, anything; and that crime of trying to assassinate Fidel should not go unpunished. Those people are also wanted in Cuba for several crimes. For instance, Posada Carriles has not been tried there for the Cubana plane bombing. He escaped from prison in Venezuela and the trial is still pending, and according to our laws, as an act of terrorism and an act of genocide that is the bombing of an airplane in mid flight, it is a crime that has no statute of limitation. That is a debt that Posada has with our country. And of course, Venezuela also has a right in that sense.

“But Posada has other pending charges in Cuba too.”

“In the matter of Posada there is the case of the bombings he ordered in Havana hotels in 1997 and 1998, for which we requested extradition. An Italian tourist named Fabio di Celmo died, and there were also a number of victims and damages. It was a terrorist action for which criminal proceedings were begun, but he cannot be charged while absent. Posada was the mastermind of the attacks. He was involved in an attempt against a Cuban ship in Honduras, for attempts against Cuban civilian planes that flew the route from Central America to Cuba; he has been involved in other assassination plots against the Commander in Chief during the Cartagena Summit¹ and in others.

There are a number of pending cases for which Posada Carriles must stand trial in a Cuban court, and that give us the right to request his extradition. And there is an obligation on the part of Panama, where he was arrested, to take our request into account and to establish cooperation in the war against terrorism, according to the international commitments that Panama has made based on the covenants it has signed.”

¹ The 4th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government, in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, in 1994.

“You speak about Posada Carriles, but what about the rest of the terrorists?”

“In the case of the others, there are also crimes for which they are wanted. There is the matter of the murder of Artaignan Díaz by Gaspar Jiménez. There is the case of the acts of terrorism by Guillermo Novo against Cuban ships, embassies, and the assassination of Cuban officials abroad. Also Pedro Crispín for the murder of Cuban diplomat Félix García, for the murder of Eulalio Negrín, for the assassination attempt in New York against our ambassador to the UN, and for several other criminal actions against Cuban interests abroad. There are several pending trials against these people. And based on it Cuba requests extradition.

On which international agreement was the extradition request based?

“While Panama had signed the International Convention against Internationally Protected Persons, Cuba was in the process of ratifying it. Therefore, the request was based on the Bustamante Code, which was the international instrument of which both Panama and Cuba were members. In order to request the extradition, we had to meet the demands of Panamanian law, and we were very strict and careful to meet all and each of those requisites. I would say that the key element in this aspect was that according to Panamanian law a person may be extradited to another country only if that country does not have capital punishment or there is an express commitment not to apply it, and that bounded Cuba to a formal and legally valid commitment in order to request the extradition.

“Was that demand met by Cuba?”

“Yes, on the part of the Popular Supreme Court, the Council of State and the Cuban government. All the legal guarantees were given in that sense. From the legal point of view, all the necessary requisites for the extradition request were met to the letter. We considered that it was a moral and legal duty, as well as an international obligation, that the extradition should have been granted.

“What were the reasons for not granting the extradition request?”

The reasons were not motivated by law. I would say that there were factors foreign to the validity of the request and to the meeting of the requisites on the part of Cuba. The government of Panama had two alternatives from the legal point of view. In the first place, they could grant extradition so that those persons were tried in Cuba

for the crimes they were wanted in Cuba, and then returned to Panama to be tried for the crimes of which they had been charged there.

“The other alternative was to wait until the trial ended in Panama. And then sent them to Cuba to be tried for the other crimes.

“The only step that we considered could not be taken, which was absurd, illogical, which was an injustice and a manner of granting impunity to the criminal record of these people, was precisely to deny extradition.”

“In how many parts is the extradition process divided?”

“I remember that I was very thorough when we submitted the documents. The first part was the request of the arrest of those persons with the purpose of extraditing them, which Minister of Foreign Relations Felipe Pérez Roque and myself did when we delivered a diplomatic note on the very night of November 18 to Vice minister Harmodio Arias, at the meeting at the university, for the Panamanian Minister was not present at the time. The request was formally delivered. Based on that letter, Cuba had 60 days to submit the documentation on which the request was made. We delivered that documentation in January, more or less 30 days after having delivered the diplomatic note in which we requested the arrest for extradition and pointed out our intention of requesting it. The Panamanian Foreign Ministry received the request and the documentation. Several days later they told us that in the manner in which the request was made it was hard for them to process it all. They believed that from the formal point of view we should make individual requests, and not a joint file as we had done.

“So?”

“Our government rewrote the request as a single one, but with individual files with all the required information and documentation. I believe that after meeting this requirement, which was the only one made by the Panamanian Foreign Ministry, we had done everything in the time limit established by Panamanian law. We even submitted it before the required 60 days, so it was up to Panama to answer it.”

“Does Panamanian law fixes a time limit to reach a decision?”

“It does not fix a time limit to make a pronouncement. Panama could study the case, and answer right away. It could, according to Panamanian law, wait until the judicial proceedings were ended in Panama and make a pronouncement afterwards in relation to the Cuban request of extradition. It was not pressured to do it in a given

time span. Indeed, in the official talks that we had—which is already public, even in a declaration by our Foreign Ministry—the agreement was that Panama would proceed with the trial and subsequently they would make a pronouncement in relation to the extradition request. These matters were discussed during the visit of a Panamanian official envoy to Cuba, in private talks. There was only one consultation that the envoy had to make to President Moscoso, so that we would, in a manner of speaking, seal a gentlemen’s agreement between both parties: we would not insist for the moment in the extradition request and they would finish the trial and then would address the extradition.

“Was it then that the Panamanian Foreign Minister gave a declaration to the press?”

“To our surprise, a few days after our conversation the Panamanian Foreign Minister announced in television that the extradition request had been denied. They sent the diplomatic notes by courier to our embassy denying the extradition. They did not even call the Ministry, the Cuban ambassador—Cuba’s legal representative—, to explain the matter, but at the same time that the minister was making the announcement, they sent this courier. From the formal point of view, the manner in which Panama adopted this unilateral decision, it was a violation of a gentlemen’s agreement. It was a unilateral manner of dismissing the conversations and the agreement that had been secretly and bilaterally reached, and it was simply unacceptable.

“The only explanation is that it was a political decision regardless of Panama’s will, and the government of Cuba explicitly said so in a declaration at the time by our Ministry of Foreign Relations. Undoubtedly our reaction, although calm, was motivated by the violation of a commitment. I believe I do not have to elaborate so that you understand that I am trying to say it in a diplomatic manner.”

“Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.”

STATEMENT BY THE CUBAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Panamanian authorities have folded under pressure

“On April 16 the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Panama received by courier Note 774 from the Ministry of Foreign Relations of

the Republic of Panama, dated April 10, 2001, that annexed Executive Orders Nos. 58, 59, 60, and 61 through which the Chancellery and the Government of Panama denied our country's request for the extradition of notorious terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Pedro Remón and Guillermo Novo Sampoll, whose horrendous crimes have been suffered by our people for three decades.

“Said Executive Orders include as fundamental reasons of the denial the following ones: —That the above mentioned persons are subject to legal proceedings in the Republic of Panama; —That previously the Republic of Panama has submitted requests of preventive detention pending extradition against Panamanian citizens in Cuba and they were denied: and —That the evidence presented as proof of the commission of crimes for which the extradition was requested offer no evidence nor rational indication of culpability of the persons requested.

“This decision and the fallacious arguments on which it is based are clear evidence that Panamanian authorities have folded to pressure that for several months it has received from the Cuban American National Foundation and the Government of the United States, to which should be added the unclear and tainted manner in which they have handled the case in its latest stage. It also shows how President Mireya Moscoso, previous to the Hemispheric Summit in Quebec, and of the voting of the anti-Cuban freak fabricated and imposed by the United States at the HRC², has gone to great pains to make a gift that pleases President Bush's government. Recently at the request of Panamanian authorities, we received Vice Minister of Foreign Relations Harmodio Arias in Cuba in order to exchange opinions with our Government on the extradition of the Cuban born terrorists detained in that country.

“He met in Havana with the highest Cuban authorities precisely on April 10, the same date on the Note that was sent to our Embassy in Panama on April 17. Vice Minister Arias showed in Havana a Note drafted by his country's chancellery with a similar wording as the one received on April 17, but he explained that: -That Note did

² Related to the continuous campaign by the US government to impose sanctions on Cuba at the UN Human Rights Commission.

not mean that Panama was denying the extradition; —It meant that due to the present complex political situation in the Republic of Panama, it was impossible for the Panamanian Government to honor the extradition request. Vice Minister Arias explained that the process would be suspended until the terrorists were tried and sentenced in Panama, and at that time the process would be resumed. It was made clear to Vice Minister Arias that in those terms the Note was not consistent with the explanations, and therefore it was agreed to consider it as not received.

Vice Minister Arias agreed that he would consult the matter again with the President of the Republic of Panama. During the rest of the conversation several articles of Panamanian applicable law were discussed, that is, the Judicial Code of the Republic of Panama, whose letter and spirit our government has abided during the process of extradition request of the detained terrorists. The Ministry of Foreign Relations considers that in view of this outcome and of the evident bad faith in the last part of the process, it is important that our people know in full how the process of extradition request has developed, as well as all the actions taken by both parts.

“Cuba met rigorously all demands and time limits established for such cases since it requested on November 18, 2000 the preventive detention of the four terrorists pending extradition. In this sense, on November 24 the Cuban chancellery submitted the formal request of extradition and annexed the first file that included evidence of crimes committed by these terrorists against our country.

“On December 21 the Panamanian chancellery sent us the formal observations to the extradition request, and also within the period demanded by law, on January 12, 2001 Cuba presented again a group de well documented individual files of each one of the detainees, met each and every one of the Panamanian requests and observations and presented new evidence and documents that also included the commitment not to impose the death penalty, a requisite for agreeing to extradition included both in Panamanian law and in the International Private Law Code (Bustamante Code), an international legal instrument of which both countries are parties. Also On February 8, 2001 Panamanian judicial authorities requested through their Embassy in Havana legal assistance for the summary against Posada Carriles and the other terrorists in

Panama for the alleged perpetration of the crime of possession of explosives.

“In spite of the non existence of an agreement between both countries on the issue of legal assistance and therefore not bound to grant said assistance, our government did not hesitate and gave the Panamanian authorities all the requested documentation, as a token of our willingness to help in the process against the four terrorists in Panama, which from the legal point of view is totally independent of the extradition process requested by Cuba.

According to Panamanian legislation, and with the international agreements that govern the matter, the Republic of Cuba has the right to insist about the request and try those notorious terrorists in our country for the crimes committed against Cuba and our people. Just to mention some of the cases, Luis Posada Carriles was the brains behind the destruction in mid flight of a Cubana Airlines plane in 1976 that crashed in front of Barbados, a horrendous crime for which he was arrested in Venezuela. He escaped from prison with the assistance and funding of the CANF³. He also masterminded the bombings of Cuban hotels in 1997 and is also responsible of many other crimes against Cuba and its people. Posada Carriles is also responsible of organizing several assassination plots against the President of the Council of State of Cuba.

“The other three terrorists are also directly responsible of numerous criminal actions against our country and against Cuban and foreign facilities, as well as of the death of Cuban citizens, such as the case of Cuban diplomat Félix García Rodríguez, assassinated while serving at the Cuban Permanent Mission to the UN; of the Cuban fishery technician, murdered in Mexico by terrorist Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo, for which crime he was arrested, but later escaped from prison; and of two Cuban diplomats, Crescencio Galañena Hernández and Jesús Cejas Arias, kidnapped and murdered in Argentina in the 1970s while serving at our country’s embassy in Buenos Aires.

“Those three terrorists have been also implicated in numerous assassination plots against Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz. Likewise those terrorists have planted explosive devices in Cuban embassies, airlines and in transportation means of other countries

³ Cuban American National Foundation.

that trade with Cuba, as a form of intimidation and coercion, for which they could be claimed by over two dozen countries due to the crimes committed against its facilities and citizens. The first argument of the Panamanian Government is that the persons requested are being tried in the Republic of Panama. The Government of the Republic of Cuba acknowledges the right of the Republic of Panama to try Posada Carriles and his accomplices for the crimes committed in that country, and as it has declared at all times in a private and public way.

“The answer to the Panamanian request of judicial assistance is proof of it. Nevertheless, Panamanian law itself acknowledges in those cases the possibility of postponing extradition until the trial is over or after the guilty parties serve the court’s sentence, and even to honor the extradition request before the case is tried in Panama, with the agreement on the other part of returning the prisoners after they have been tried and serve their sentences, in order to continue the legal proceedings initiated in Panamanian territory. Therefore, the first grounds do not justify the denial.

“It must be made clear, and necessary to repeat it, that Cuba did not request the extradition of the four terrorist for the crimes committed in Panama on November, 2000, but for their numberless crimes perpetrated against Cuba and other Cuban citizens prior to that date, crimes that have been repudiated by practically all members of the international community. Panamanian authorities, according to their own laws, could had applied one of the other variants, including the one suggested by Vice Minister Harmodio Arias in his visit to Havana, that is, to try them in Panama for the crimes committed in that country, and then consider the extradition. Yet, they chose to deny it, which means that such a decision was made for considerations of a political character and in total disrespect for Panamanian law. Therefore, and according to Panamanian law, the request will not be considered at another time.

“This unjustifiable position contradicts the one that according to Vice Minister Arias the Government of Panama was consulting us. The Government of Panama also argues that it has previously presented requests of preventive detention for subsequent extradition against Panamanian citizens that were in Cuba, and that such requests were denied, so it is applying reciprocity in the present case. Although the Note of the Panamanian Chancellery and the annexed Executive Orders do not detail those cases, subsequently the

Panamanian press and even Panamanian government officials have been more explicit.

“In this respect we wish to clarify that reciprocity is a principle of General International Law applied to similar cases. The only formal request of extradition submitted to the Republic of Cuba by the Republic of Panama was an evident political case, and therefore not similar to the case of the terrorists wanted by Cuba. International law and the very Panamanian Judicial Code, in its Article 2508, Numeral 7 acknowledges that those that allegedly have committed ‘political crimes’ are not subject to extradition. Also that case did not involve a terrorist, as is the case of the four persons arrested in the Republic of Panama, so reciprocity is not applicable. On that occasion the person claimed by Panama was granted political asylum by Cuba, according to international instruments of which both the Republic of Panama and the Republic of Cuba are parties.

Indeed, that person subsequently returned to Panama when the situation changed, was not arrested and today lives there and works for the Panamanian people’s well-being. Nor it is applicable in the other two cases that have been mentioned by Panamanian media, for they were simple requests of information on the whereabouts of certain persons, asked in one case by Panamanian authorities and in another by Peruvian authorities, about a Panamanian citizen who requested asylum in the latter country, and which neither by character nor nature can be considered a request of extradition.

“In reference to the third claim, in the sense that the proof presented does not supply evidence or rational indications of the culpability of the wanted persons, the Panamanian authorities did not deem as enough the irrefutable evidence and the testimonies that included the 2,492 pages in 28 fascicles of the submitted files. They did not deem as enough evidence or even rational indications the filming and the taping of the terrorists themselves confessing their crimes. They did not deem enough the declassified documents by the United States, which prove the moral character of these abominable terrorist and of their undisputable responsibility in the planning and execution of bloody crimes. They did not deem enough the repudiation of the international community or the demands of the Panamanian people themselves. There is every indication that visits to Panama by representatives of the Miami Cuban American mafia, and particularly from the CANF and their pressures on Pana-

manian authorities to obtain the freedom of the four terrorists did their work.

“It is necessary to insist that although the Note of denial to our request of extradition was dated on April 10, the Panamanian Ministry of Foreign Relations waited until the day before the voting of the resolution against Cuba at the HRC. This suspicious coincidence makes us think that this was no accident, and forces us to believe there was a probable link to the plan drafted in Washington and deployed in Geneva in an attempt to condemn Cuba and justify the genocidal blockade imposed against Cuba for over 40 years.

“Likewise we should also remind that on the day the note of the case with the corresponding Executive Orders was sent to our Embassy in Panama, it is coincidental with the date on which the treacherous mercenary invasion was launched 40 years later at Playa Girón⁴, a symbolic coincidence of the aggressions against our people. The Ministry of Foreign Relations expressed the strongest indignation of the people of Cuba for the unfair denial of extradition, and at the same time repudiates those who allowed being convinced and permitted foreign intervention to an act of Panamanian sovereignty, and strongly condemns those who prevented justice from being dealt. The shameful complicity of the Panamanian authorities with the cover up of universally condemned terrorists acts will remain in the memory of present and future generations of Cubans, of the relatives of those that have fallen and in the minds of all honest and honorable men and women of the world; the true sovereignty for which so much Panamanian blood was spilled will be blemished; and the impartiality of the legal process against the four terrorists to be held on Panamanian soil will remain in doubt.

“In the diplomatic note delivered to the Panamanian Foreign Ministry, the Government of the Republic of Cuba has clearly expressed that if the terrorists that planned the massive murder of Panamanian students and other persons with the purpose of assassinating the President of Cuba escape or are rescued from the Panamanian insecure prisons, or are favored by arbitrary judicial decisions that

⁴ Bay of Pigs is known in Cuba as Playa Girón, a beach where the decisive battle against the US backed invasion was fought. On April 19, 1961, Cuban troops and popular militia stormed the last stronghold of the mercenaries, barely 72 hours after they had landed.

guarantee their impunity of recent and previous crimes, bowing to pressure and blackmail from the terrorist groups in Miami and from the United States Government, the Government of Panama will be held accountable.”

“Havana, May 2, 2001.”

Research made by us in Panama found that the person to whom Cuba granted diplomatic asylum was Luis A. “Lucho” Gómez, a Panamanian lawyer and journalist. On an afternoon we visited him at his office on the fourth floor of Los Cristales Building, located on Cuba Avenue and 38 St., Panama City. Previously we had contacted him by telephone and explained the subject of the interview.

“You must be aware that you were one of President Mireya Moscoso’s arguments for not honoring the Cuban extradition request of Posada Carriles.”

“They used me as an excuse, for when I left for Havana I was not wanted, and they began to piece that together when I left, even before, when I was still at the Cuban embassy here. They indicted me eleven times and I beat them myself; that is, when I returned from exile I had beaten the eleven trumped up charges against me. Because they had no evidence the cases were thrown out of court. I beat them on their own courts, and when Cuba asks for the extradition of terrorist and assassin Luis Posada Carriles they wanted to put me on the same level with that man, and then seeing that they had no other argument to give to the Cuban government, they used my exile as pretext.”

“Why use Lucho Gomez’s exile?”

“Because they did not have another Lucho Gómez, they had no one else. When I arrived in Cuba there were twelve Panamanian exiles in Cuba, and they chose me because politically I was the most visible one, their adversary for a long time, since the assembly, and politically, from the point of view of an excuse it was easier for them. When they requested Lucho Gómez’s extradition the only thing they were looking for was that a great opponent has escaped, and that they wanted to use it as a symbol, like they did with many Panamanians that were detained for two or three years and then had to be released. Who compensated them for that time in jail? Who com-

pensated their families? In our case, what they wanted was to keep up the persecution. But thanks to the revolution and Cuba's international solidarity, we were welcomed and stayed for fourteen months in the embassy and then they let me go to Havana."

"Why in the Cuban Embassy?"

"Because there was a certain bonding; because in the past there had been certain youth and student relations, and because it was the best guarantee for our life. Remember that they broke into the Peruvian embassy looking for Panamanian political leaders, and they wanted to storm the Cuban Embassy, but they were not allowed to do it. The talk was that the Cuban embassy was a different matter; that there were mechanisms for self-defense and respect for international law and for that reason those who recklessly believed that they would be able to break into the Cuban Embassy thought things better, but they were very close to doing it.

"Look, Ivón, it was an unusual event in the history of exiles. For the first time in the case of Panama —and we have been discussing this— a citizen that is in an embassy agrees with the diplomat in charge that an official from the prosecutor's office be allowed in the embassy. And in my case it was a prosecutor, a lady that after taking my deposition said: 'This gentleman has nothing to do with this case,' and that was never discussed again. But it was the first time that a government such as Cuba's allowed a citizen from another country to give a deposition to an official from the prosecutor's office in its embassy."

"Lucho, why do you think that Posada Carriles is not extradited?"

"First of all because of US pressures. In his many actions and in his many declarations Posada has made it clear that he is a US agent, that he served US interests in many countries. I believe the US pressured Panama so that they would not extradite him to Cuba. The only thing the Panamanian government did was find an excuse, and the Panamanian government made a big mistake. Posada Carriles has been detained for three years and Panama would have avoided a big headache if they had been tried.

"I believe Madam President, who already has a big residence in Miami waiting for her after she finishes her term in office, thought more like a Miami resident than like the president of a sovereign country, and knuckled under US pressure and under the pressure of those

that from Miami make their war with the blood and the pain of their countrymen, and have made a business of that war, have gotten rich. And more than that, I believe that in the case of Panama it gave in to pressure by Cubans from Miami and from the US government.”

“Were you tried after you returned to Panama?”

“No, I had already won all my cases. One of them fell by its own weight, because they told me, ‘you took part in such and such event,’ and I said, look where I had traveled, find out where I was at the time, and when they looked they found I wasn’t in Panama. It is a big mistake to compare me with Posada Carriles. He murdered 73 young people, flight crew, the Cuban fencing team; a man that worked for the security services in Venezuela, El Salvador, Chile, and who has been involved in many murders and plots against the people and government of Cuba. It is disrespectful with those of us that have concern for the right to life of humanity.

“Lucho, what do you think of Fidel’s denunciation of the assassination plot?”

“I believe that denunciation was good for Panama and the world, because in the presence of so many heads of state, it was an attempt not only on Fidel’s life, but also against the lives of more than five thousand people –staff, students that were at the University Auditorium. If that bomb had gone off, the consequences at a two hundred meter range... we would still be counting the dead. It gave the Panamanian government a respite, because after the bombing Panama would not have been able to explain to the world what had happened, and that was their responsibility.”

“Thank you very much, Lucho.”

The discrepancies about the denial of extradition were used by the Miami mafia to question trade relations between Panama and Cuba and discourage business alleging non payments on the part of Cuban companies. They speculated on a possible breaking off of relations between both countries. Counterrevolutionary Raymond Molina, a self-appointed representative of Unidad Cubana (Spanish for Cuban Unity) in Miami, met with Panamanian Foreign Minister José Miguel Alemán. Molina thanked Minister Alemán the denial of Posada’s extradition to Cuba.

On December 31, 2001, the Panamanian Chancellery received the extradition request of Luis Posada Carriles by the government of Venezuela. According to experts, Panama has no valid arguments to

deny Venezuela's request. Posada is a Venezuelan citizen; there is no death penalty in Venezuela, Posada is a fugitive from the law in Venezuela; and there is an extradition agreement between both countries. In the face of such information, Miami counterrevolutionaries speeded up their contacts with the Panamanian government in order to obtain the release of the detainees.

Salvadoran media reported on March 8, 2002 that President Francisco Flores announced that El Salvador's Supreme Court of Justice had requested the extradition of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. During the signing of a trade agreement on March 6, President Moscoso of Panama commented on the matter.

Apparently he would be charged for the illegal documentation he had obtained in El Salvador, so once in that country he would evade justice once again. Why not think of another ploy to delay or avoid honoring Venezuela's extradition request?

On March 7, 2002, Salvadoran President Francisco Flores announced that President of Panama Mireya Moscoso had told him that Panamanian authorities were certain that it was not true that Posada Carriles was planning an assassination and that he would be indicted for other crimes.

Another declaration of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations once again brings out the truth.

STATEMENT BY THE CUBAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The real reason for the denial is the lack of political will on the part of Panamanian authorities for truly contributing to justice

"The real reason for the denial is the lack of political will on the part of Panamanian authorities for truly contributing to justice. Yesterday, May 30, 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Relations delivered a note to the Republic of Panama's Chancellery duly answering the one that had been delivered on May 14 to the Cuban Ambassador in Panama by that country's Chancellery, which attempted to justify the denial of the extradition requested by Cuba of the four international terrorists detained in Panama, who besides plotting to assassinate the

Commander in Chief, for more than three decades have committed uncountable crimes against our people.

“The Government of Panama, through a twisted interpretation of its own laws, keeps insisting that the fact that the terrorists will be tried in Panama for the acts they were plotting during the recent Iberian American Summit, which besides the assassination attempt against Comrade Fidel would have cost the life of hundreds of students and other Panamanian citizens, is an impediment for extradition. The article of the Panamanian Criminal Code that the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Republic Panama uses to justify the denial, what really covers is the possibility of postponing extradition when the requested citizens are subject to a legal procedure in Panama, and this was precisely one of the options discussed in Havana with Vice Minister Harmodio Arias, in strict accordance with Panamanian legislation, as our people were timely informed. Actually, in order to accept extradition, and independently of any other consideration, the authorities of the Republic of Panama had only to act according to their own legislation, without any capricious interpretations, and have the moral and ethical courage to act in accordance with the wishes of the Panamanian people, who have repeatedly voiced their support to the extradition of the above mentioned terrorists. The Panamanian authorities also claim that they are acting based on reciprocity, for in 1993 Cuba did not extradite a Panamanian citizen to Panama to whom Cuba had granted diplomatic asylum, and who in a very suspicious manner had been charged by the Government of Panama of homicide and grievous bodily harm when that person was already in Cuba and had been granted the appropriate safe-conduct by Panamanian authorities. For Cuba it was incomprehensible how after conceding safe-conduct to an individual who had been granted diplomatic asylum for political reasons, accusations of common crimes had surfaced, of a totally different nature from the causes that had prompted the benefit of asylum. In regard to the principle of reciprocity, the Republic of Cuba has always maintained and still does that there must be similitude in the case of extradition requests with those countries with which there is no agreement on the matter, and considers that the interpretation of the principle of reciprocity claimed by Panamanian authorities is arbitrary and superficial. Additionally, on that occasion the Panamanian authorities were unable to prove that the

real causes of the extradition request were the commission of a common crime on the part of the person requested. It is a disgrace that under the pretext of the Cuban denial to the above mentioned extradition Panamanian authorities have dismissed the high degree of dangerousness of the four criminals detained at present in Panama and the seriousness of the crimes committed by them, which in no way are comparable to the ones attributable to the person in question. Panamanian authorities also claim that in the evidence presented by Cuba there was no conviction by Cuban legal authorities against the four detained terrorists, forgetting that their own legislation and the Bustamante Code—the international instrument signed by both countries—, which among other things regulate cases such as the present one, accept that to honor extradition request a conviction by a court of the requiring state is not mandatory, only that the persons in question have been ‘indicted, sanctioned or are wanted’ for the crimes committed.’ The Government of Panama is well aware, through the voluminous and detailed files of extradition submitted to the Panamanian Ministry of Foreign Relations, that the four requested persons have been duly indicted in the Republic of Cuba for the crimes for which they are wanted. Yet, what has caused more indignation to the Cuban people and government is the reiteration in this new Panamanian Note that the extradition is denied because of the absence of evidence of the crimes for which the extradition is requested. The Ministry of Foreign Relations believes that the true cause for the denial is the lack of political will of Panamanian authorities for contributing to justice. Therefore, and bearing this fact in mind, the Ministry of Foreign Relations has reiterated to the Panamanian Chancellery its serious doubts that those that with their acts have brought mourning to dozens of Cuban families and to all our people, and have made of terrorism—condemned by practically all the international community—a way of life and a daily performance will be convicted in Panama. The Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Cuba considers that by denying extradition, and thus preventing with their act the justice that a whole nation demands, the Government of the Republic of Panama in practice has become an accomplice to the impunity of the terrorists and of the grief of millions of Cubans victims of the uncountable acts of the four infamous and self-confessed international terrorists detained in Panama. The Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Cuba has clearly

reiterated to the Panamanian Chancellery that if the four terrorists or any of them escape, or are favored by arbitrary decisions that guarantee that impunity for present and past crimes that we denounced, ceding to pressures from terrorist elements of Miami and the Government of the United States, it will be the full responsibility of the Government of Panama.

“Havana, May 30, 2001.”

TERRORISTS TO JAIL

The terrorists detained on November 17, 2000 were taken to a maximum security cell of the Department of Investigations and Information (DIIP), a division of Panama’s National Police. The DIIP maximum security cell was built for drug dealer Castrillón Henao. It is considered more secure than El Renacer Prison, for there are very strict rules and control of visitors. The facility is air conditioned, has color TV and inmates are free to make telephone calls.

On January 2001, Gaspar Jiménez and Guillermo Novo were transferred to El Renacer Prison at the request of defense lawyer Rogelio Cruz, who claimed health problems of both inmates and bad living conditions. Subsequently Posada and Remón were also transferred at the request of chief of Panamanian Police Carlos Bares.



AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination

Fidel arrives in Panama
on November 17, 2000.



César Park Hotel, where heads of state and delegations stayed during
the 10th Iberian American Summit in Panama City.



President Fidel Castro at the Atlapa Conventions Center, venue of the 10th Iberian American Summit.

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



Cuban President Fidel Castro's speech at the 10th Iberian American Summit.



Fidel denounces the presence in Panama of international terrorist Posada Carriles, November 17, 2000.



Journalists at the press conference where Fidel denounced Posada Carriles' presence in Panama.

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



Fidel visits the Church of St. Peter Apostle and pays homage to General Omar Torrijos at the crypt where his remains are modestly buried.

AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination





University of Panama's rector Julio Ballarinos and other officials receive the Cuban leader at the campus' Auditorium.



Fidel at the University of Panama's Auditorium. The students performed typical dances in the *pollera* (traditional dress).

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



University of Panama's students and faculty at the solidarity meeting with Cuba.

AUDITORIUM
a failed vaccination



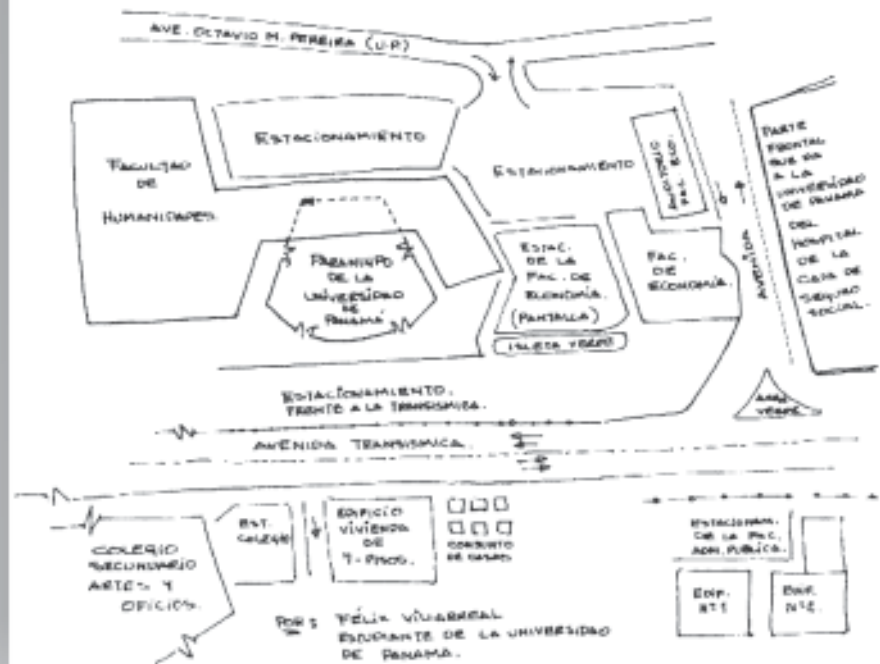
Fidel speaks to the numerous Panamanians that attended the solidarity meeting at the Auditorium.



AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination

The audience applauds and cheers Fidel and the Cuban Revolution at the Auditorium. If the terrorist act had taken place most of these people would have died.

DAÑO DE LA EXPLOSIÓN Y DE LA ONDA EXPANSIVA QUE PUDO OCACIONAR, LA CARGA C4, QUE LOS TERRORISTAS PONDRON EN EL PARRANFIO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE PANAMÁ.



A sketch by Félix Villareal, an architecture student at the University of Panama, showing the facilities that would have been destroyed by the explosion of over 30 pounds of C-4 explosive.

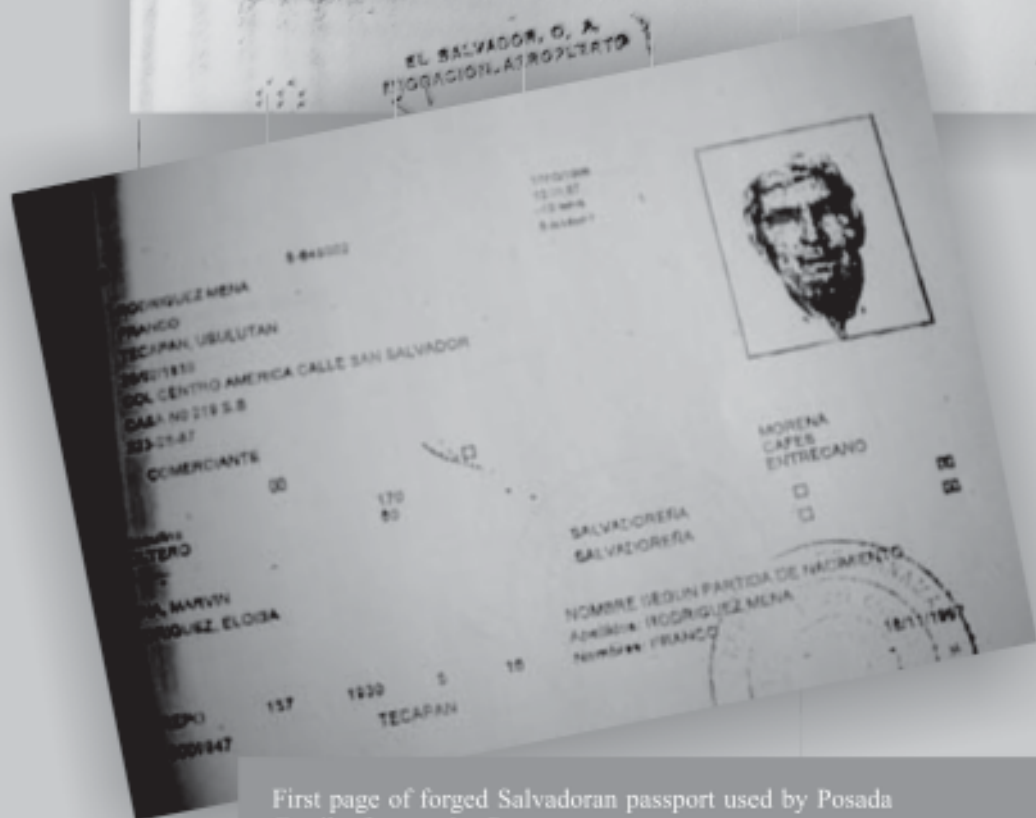
AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



Terrorists Luis Posada Carriles and Pedro Crispín Remón at El Renacer Prison, Panamá, 2003.

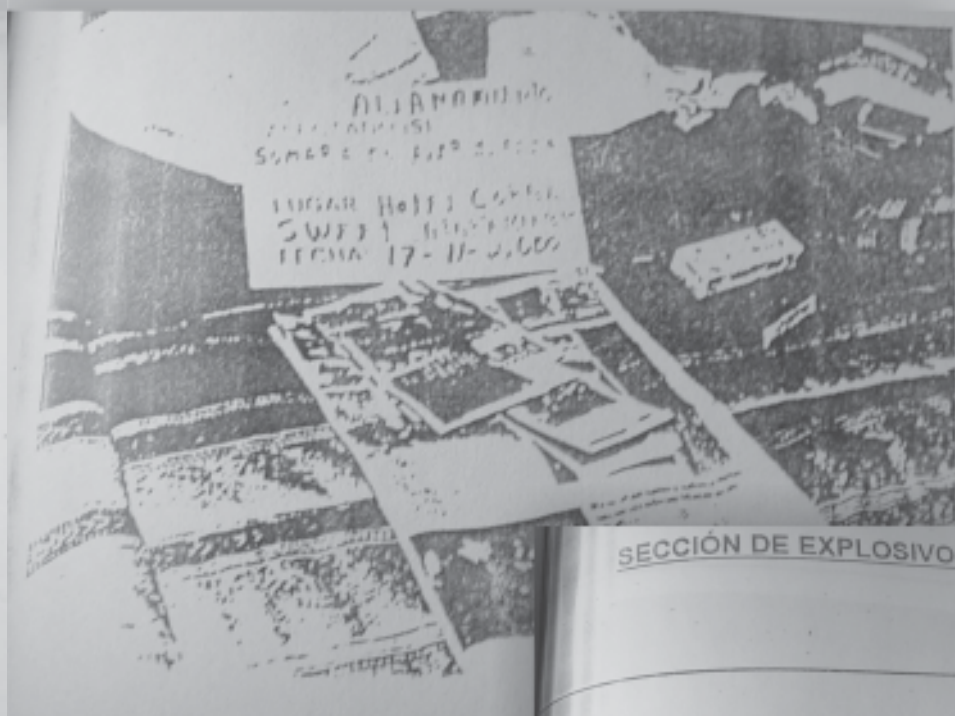


Forged Salvadoran Passport used by Posada Carriles for entering Panama.



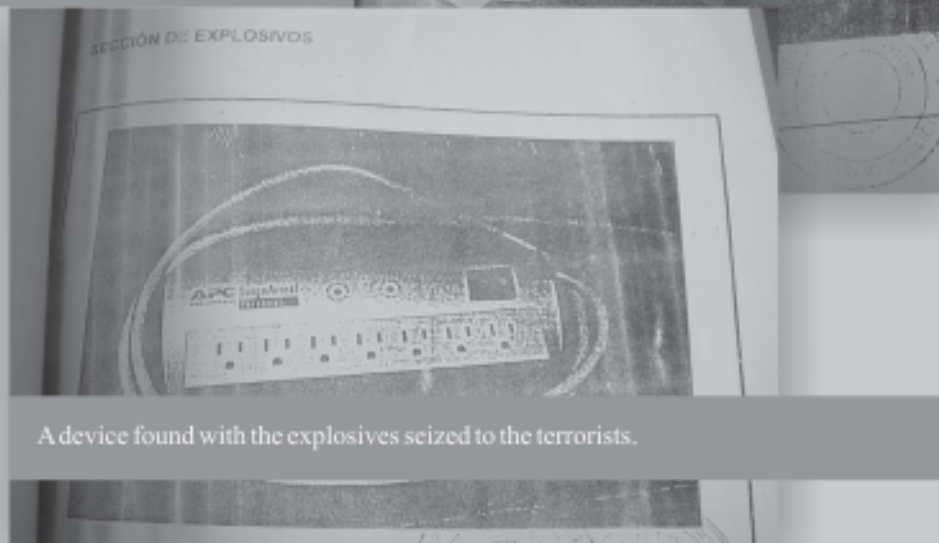
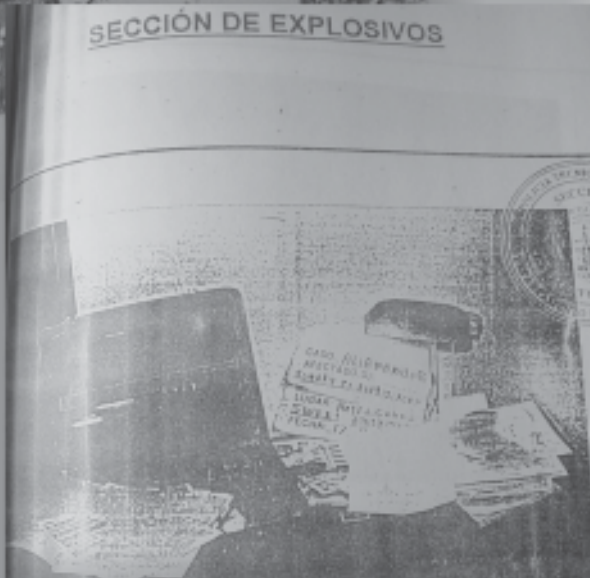
First page of forged Salvadoran passport used by Posada Carriles for entering Panama.

AUDITORIUM a failed assassination



Documents and belongings of terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Pedro Crispin Remón, Gaspar Jiménez and Guillermo Novo found by the police at their rooms at the Coral Suite Hotel, Panama City, November 17, 2000.

Investigation by explosive experts. Photograph of seized explosives by Panamanian police.



A device found with the explosives seized to the terrorists.



The grave of terrorists José Valladares (aka Pepe el Cubano) at Bugaba Cemetery, province of Chiriquí, Panama.



Virgilio, an employee of terrorist José Valladares (aka Pepe el Cubano). Front yard of Pepe el Cubano's home near the Panamanian-Costa Rican border.



AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination

International terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Pedro Crispin Remón, Gaspar Jiménez and Guillermo Novo leaving Panama's Maritime Court Building.



Anti Cuba terrorists residents of Miami that attended the trial against Posada and his accomplices. From left to right in the foreground: Guajiro (with hat), Jesús Peñalver Mazorra and René Cruz Cruz (white pullover). The last two have participated in armed incursions against Cuba. In 1995 both were arrested in California when preparing a terrorist act against Cuba.



Miami criminals and arms traffickers Jesús Peñalver Mazorra y René Cruz Cruz challenge Panamanian guards outside the Maritime Court Building.

AUDITORIUM a failed assassination



University of Panama students demonstrate outside the court building against the presence of terrorists from Miami who came to support the crime. Jesús Peñalver Mazorra, publicly accused in 1999 as part of an alleged assassination plot against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.



René Cruz Cruz and Osvaldo Mitat outside the Maritime Court Building after a hearing of the trial against Posada Carriles and other terrorists that planned the assassination of President Fidel Castro. Osvaldo Mitat was aboard the Santrina, the boat in which Posada Carriles was smuggled into the United States. In November, 2005 Mitat was charged in the US, together with Santiago Álvarez, of illegal arms possession and other crimes.



Student outrage because of the presence of Miami terrorists inside and outside of the Maritime Court Building. In the photo, René Cruz Cruz and Osvaldo Mitat.

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



René Cruz Cruz gets hysterical. Besides him, Mayín Correa.

AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination



Terrorist Reynol Rodríguez, head of CORU in Puerto Rico. CORU was the terrorist organization that claimed the assassination of young Carlos Muñoz Varela for promoting family visits to Cuba by Cuban émigrés. Reynol left the courtroom when Judge Paniza read his name that appeared in an FBI report on crimes perpetrated by CORU.

AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination



Lissette Díaz Francia, daughter of Cuban fishery expert Artaignan Díaz, who was murdered in Mexico by terrorist Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, talks with Lucho Gómez, one of the lawyers of Panamanian plaintiffs.

From left to right: Félix Negrín, Eulalio Negrín's brother, murdered by Pedro Crispin Remón; Carlos A. Cremata, son of Carlos Cremata Trujillo, victim of the Cubana airplane's bombing in Barbados; Lissette Díaz Francia and Domingo García Rodríguez, brother of Cuban diplomat Félix García, shot to death in New York by terrorist Pedro Crispin Remón. With them is cameraman Antonio Gómez. These relatives of victims attended the trial of their parents' and brothers' murderers.





The President of Panama meets Otto Reich in February, 2004.

AUDITORIUM

a failed assassination



The converted shrimp boat Santrina, owned by Santiago Álvarez, which was used to smuggle Luis Posada Carriles from Isla Mujeres, Mexico, to the United States on March 18, 2005.



Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles gives a press conference in Miami a few hours before his arrest on May, 2005.

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination



REPÚBLICA DE PANAMA
PRESIDENCIA
PANAMA, PANAMA

Panamá, 12 de septiembre de 2003

Licenciada
IVÓN DEULOFEU DEULOFEU
Periodista TV Cubana
E. S. D.

Licenciada Deulofeu:

De acuerdo a su nota del 9 de septiembre le agradecemos la solicitud para entrevistar a la Señora Mireya Moscoso, Presidenta de la República. Lamentablemente en estos momentos la Señora Presidenta, por tener una agenda muy apretada no podrá atender su petición, pero con efecto de la celebración del Centenario le ofrecemos una reunión con la Licda. Ivonne Young, Ministra de la Presidencia.

Agradecidos por el interés en la entrevista, quedamos de usted.

Atentamente,


Ing. **MARIO BOGNONI**
Asesor de Información y Prensa



"Preparémonos para Conmemorar el Centenario"

AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination

Answer denying a request by the author for an interview with President of Panama Mireya Moscoso. The request mentioned two issues: the war against terrorism and the Centennial of the Republic of Panama.

AUDITORIUM
Classification

CONFIDENCIAL
(CLASIFICACION)

01086 04

INFORME DEL AGENTE

1.—Sujeto:

CONTINUACION....

Lugar:

Asunto:

2.—Fecha-Hora:

18 SET 1975

3.—Número de Archivo o de Control:

4.—Evaluación:

5.—Información:

f. - LUYS POSADA CARRILES (a) EL BAMBÍ, Cubano.
 Este sujeto fué Comisario de la DISIP cuando COPEY. Se recibió información de que el Dato. de Estado USA a través de la CIA le facilitó equipos técnicos de Seguimiento, interceptación de Comunicaciones y éste montó una Oficina de Investigaciones y así tiene a los Norteamericanos informados y hace investigaciones a sus requerimientos sobre hechos en Venezuela.

NOTA: Se pudo determinar que las Oficinas se llaman INVESTIGACIONES COMERCIALES E INDUSTRIALES S.A. (ICI) y está ubicada en Avda. Libertador- Centro Profesional Ejecutivo- Piso 7- Apto. 78- Tlf. 715909. La Junta Administradora o Directiva está integrada por:

(1) JOAQUIN CHAFFARDET RAMOS-Venezolano-Administrador General. Este fué Ex-Secretario General de la DISIP y es miembro de Copey. Reside en Edif. Julio-20 to 41-Avda. Vargas- Urb. Santa Fe.

(2) LUYS POSADA CARRILES- Director Gerente-(a) EL BAMBÍ. Vive en Calle Los Cabriales - Qta. Janet- El Llano.

(3) ADOLFO RIVERA MARIAS, Suplente. También fué funcionario de la DISIP cuando Copey. Vive en Calle "A"- Resid. San Castán- Apto. 50 - Guatimore.

(4) AUGUSTO EDGAR CORTES SILVA, Suplente. Vive en las mismas oficinas.

6.—Opinión:

INFORMACION SUPLEMENTARIA SOBRE ESSE GRUPO: A raíz del Cambio de Gobierno y de su desmembramiento de la DISIP, se pudo obtener de un lote de armas cortas, explosivos y otros equipos.

Continúa.....

7.—Clave del Agente:

Confidential report on Posada Carriles and Joaquin Chaffardet's actions in Venezuela, September, 1975.



AUDITORIUM
a failed assassination

Author's interview with Vice President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela José Vicente Rangel, February, 2006.

Prosecutor Argentina Barrera Investigates the Case

The First Prosecuting Office of the First Panama Circuit conducted the preliminary investigations led by First Circuit Prosecutor Argentina Barrera Flores, a young, brave, impetuous woman. Ms Barrera has long, mahogany colored hair that she constantly combs with her fingers. Her delicate and feminine figure belies the steel armor of her profession. She is distrustful and very intelligent, most sure of herself and the owner of an implacably logical mind.

Barrera and a large number of experts and detectives began investigations, procedures and inquiries of facts, sites and persons.

I telephoned the prosecutor at the time of the preliminary hearing. She agreed to an interview. The meeting would take place in her office at the Higher Prosecuting Office of Veraguas province.

“As Circuit Prosecutor it was my job to initiate procedures. The crime was truly deplorable, and thank God it had no lethal consequences, not only to the university, because it was there that the act would have taken place, but also to the Panamanian community and in general to the international community, because terrorism is terrible and is not justifiable for any reason.

“How do you evaluate this case?”

“Undoubtedly it is a complex case, a very delicate one regarding the preliminary investigation and the legal proceedings. Why? Because in this kind of event, in this kind of crime, it is done in such a manner that the persons, the perpetrators, try to go unpunished, so it is up to us as investigators, as representatives of a society, to follow the appropriate steps, one by one, in order to reconstruct the historic truth of what happened, the acts that were attempted and that are totally documented.

“Yes, it was complex, but we fulfilled a hard job that we had been entrusted with by the law and the Constitution.”

“Why were they not charged with the crime of terrorism?”

“Indeed, after we finished this arduous task, which was hard and difficult as I already explained, but with positive results in proving the limits of the crime both in what we lawyers called the objective and subjective aspects, we reached the imperative conclusion, not on a whim.

“The evidence is on record, and it was precisely the evidence that moved us to recommend to the trial court, that is the judge that should preside in this case, to summon to trial, a criminal trial of these persons.

“You asked me why they were not charged with the crime of terrorism. It happens that we must follow our compilation of criminal procedures and the conducts committed by the individuals in our country should be included in the Criminal Code, and precisely a study of the procedural law, of the factual elements with the regulations contained therein allowed us at that moment to provisionally categorize the conducts in this Penal Code.

“It is up to the judge then to evaluate, as it was the case. The judge evaluated and mentioned the crimes for which they would be tried, which was in total agreement with the conclusions of the Prosecutor’s Office at the time of submitting its conclusions.

“Does the prosecution have evidence? Is there a possibility that in the end there would be no trial?”

“I don’t believe so. There are criminal proceedings in place due to a crime committed in our country. The authorities that have started these investigations and that at present are executing the indictment, the representatives of the prosecution and the court that in proper time will decide, will do so according to the law, according to the probative value, which is to pass a sentence according to this probative value and to the responsibility of each.

“We are certain that the proceedings will not be hindered under any circumstance until a final verdict is reached, which should be one according to the evidence and commitments of the defendants with their acts of a criminal character described and defined by the Penal Code and already categorized by the appropriate court in its writ of summons to trial.

“Why did you drop the case? Were you asked to?”

“It was my responsibility in the beginning because I was head of the Circuit’s First Prosecution Office. At the time I worked in the criminal division, but I have been promoted to another place in the province, which has caused me a great satisfaction, and now I can’t fulfill those obligations, but must see to other cases that are processed in this area.

Argentina Barrera is at present the Higher Prosecutor at Coclé and Veraguas, two Panamanian provinces.

“Were you pressured by any of the parties involved in the case?”

“No, there was no pressure of any kind. The only motivation for this investigation was that we Panamanians, and particularly the authorities in the Prosecutor’s Office, the authorities of this country cannot allow under any circumstance that one of our guests to the Iberian American Summit be attacked, assassinated, insulted; neither under any circumstance can the authorities allow that our community be massacred, nor our guests, under the pretext of causes that have absolutely no justification in terms of a criminal process.

“So what we have as a commitment to this country and with the sister nations is not to allow this type of attacks, no terrorism, no attacks to our local citizens or to foreign ones.”

“Thank you, Ms Barrera.

On October 12, 2001, the then Prosecutor of the First Judicial District of Panama submitted the request of a trial to the Fifth District Judge Enrique Paniza. The defendants were charged with possession of explosives, conspiracy for a crime against public security and possession of false documents. Subsequently prosecutor Argentina Barrera was replaced by prosecutor Arquímides Sáenz.

**POSSIBILITY OF A JURY OF CONSCIENCE
ELIMINATED. ACCORDING TO ROGELIO CRUZ,
THEY WILL BE RELEASED BEFORE MAY**

On early March the Second Higher Court reached a decision that “Posada and his group” should be tried by the District Judge based

on the charges by the prosecution and rejected the plea of attempted homicide. In this manner the possibility of a “jury of conscience” was dismissed, but the dismissal of the charge of attempted murder against Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, the true objective of the terrorists in Panama, was legally established.

The afore mentioned decision was used by lawyers of the defense, who had declared that “Posada and his group” were innocent, and that the prosecution did not believe there was enough evidence to link their clients with the alleged plot to assassinate the Cuban president.

Narco-lawyer Rogelio Cruz said that the consideration by Higher Prosecutor Dimas Guevara was a step to dismiss the case against his clients and did not rule out the possibility that they could be freed before May.

“We don’t want to rush things, but there are alternatives to free them. We hope that they have a fair trial and do not become victims of a decision due to pressures from the Cuban government,” said Rogelio Cruz to Cuban counterrevolutionary radio host Ninoska Pérez Castellón.

From the outset of the proceedings, lawyers for the defense and counterrevolutionaries living in Panama and Miami tried to pressure Panamanian authorities to obtain a precautionary measure of house arrest instead of jail in favor of the defendants. With that objective in mind they launched several press campaigns for influencing public opinion. Among the most vocals were infamous counterrevolutionaries Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos, Raymond Molina, Santiago Álvarez and Mayín Correa.

The precautionary measure of house arrest instead of jail was a constant request by Rogelio Cruz in favor of mastermind terrorist Posada Carriles, according to Cruz, “due to his delicate state of health”.

POSADA CAN STAY IN PENITENTIARY, SAYS DIRECTOR OF PANAMANIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

In late October Judge Enrique Paniza ordered the Institute of Forensic Medicine to carry out the relevant medical examination for determining if Luis Posada Carriles could stay in the facilities of a local jail.

On November 7, former mayor of Panama City Mayín Correa and host of a radio program in KW Continente radio station interviewed Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine Dr. Humberto Mas. Dr. Mas was succinct and clarified the detained terrorists' state of health, in spite of Ms. Correa's pressures to make him adopt a political stance.

On that day Dr. Mas said in relation to Posada that "experts that examined and checked him found no clogged arteries as alleged, and his only symptom is high blood pressure, for which he received treatment at the prison." Additionally he declared that "the condition of skin cancer is one of the most benign and can be treated in prison, so a precautionary measure is not necessary."

Likewise he said that "Guillermo Novo had a terminal calculus in the urethra and was under treatment".

On November 7, 2001 Novo was taken to San Fernando Clinic, a private hospital, where he underwent surgery for his kidney calculus. While hospitalized he had a high blood pressure episode. He recovered and was returned to prison.

In spite of medical opinion, the campaign pressured on as part of the strategy of the defense. The terrorists constantly complained of false or real medical conditions in order to be examined by doctors and thus build up a record as a basis for the precautionary measure of house arrest instead of jail, submitted on several occasions by counselor Rogelio Cruz.

ATTEMPT TO QUASH CIVIL SUITS. LAWYERS APPEAL

On December 28, 2001, the Higher Second Court voted by 2 to 1 to admit the incident of controversy that had been submitted by defense lawyer Rogelio Cruz to quash the lawsuits made in August of that year by CONUSI-SUNTRAC (National Coordination of Labor Union Unity-Construction Workers Single Labor Union) and CNTP; five students' organizations (FER-29 Students' Front, Popular University Block, Thought and Transforming Action, Bolivarian Student Movement, and Motherland Youth), and KUNAYALA Indigenous Movement.

Judges Joaquín Ortega, Wilfredo Sáenz and Andrés Almendral of the Second Higher Court, the former the deponent of the case,

took part in the discussion about the request to quash the civil suits. Ortega claimed that “plaintiffs do not show that they have suffered damages.” Sáenz refused to vote on the decision arguing that “the incident of controversy was submitted overdue, and that Law 31 of 1998, Protection to Victims of Crimes allows them to appear as legitimate plaintiffs.”

On January 30 and February 1, 2002, lawyers for the plaintiffs appealed to the Supreme Court’s Criminal Court. But while the Court did not make a ruling, the plaintiffs’ lawyers were ineligible. That meant that if the trial were summoned before the Supreme Court’s ruling of the appeal or if the results were negative, the lawyers would not be able to take part in the trial.

The Supreme Court’s Criminal Courtroom is made up of three judges. In order to make a ruling they must ask the opinion of the Higher Prosecutor, Dimas Guevara. Answering a request of the Second Higher Court, Guevara said that “there is no evidence documenting the charge of Attempted Homicide”.

The proceedings against international terrorists Luis Clemente Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and Pedro Crispín Remón took more than three years due to post-trial comings and goings, pressures on the part of the Miami mafia and plotting of escape attempts of the defendants, besides political pressures.

In spite of it all, officials from the Prosecutor’s Office and the solidarity of the Panamanian people avoided the destruction of a process that was impartially done and according to the law.

EL RENACER PRISON

The road to El Renacer Prison, 25 km from Panama City, is a narrow highway. Inmates can have not only family visits at any time and on any day, but also from journalists, both Panamanian and Americans.

The best description of the facility is given by Julio Berríos, a lawyer for the plaintiffs.

What kind of prison is El Renacer that looks down on the Panama Canal?

“You can’t really call El Renacer a maximum security prison, such as the ones in other countries. It was the facility the Americans used

to keep their nationals that committed crimes in the so called Canal Zone, at the time the Canal was under their control. The Panamanians took it over and it has been used for certain kind of detainees, mainly those that require certain special considerations because they are part of the oligarchy or from the upper classes, and surprisingly these international terrorists have been given the special treatment of been kept in this penitentiary.

"Other jails are more secure, like La Joyita, which is near the jungle, and where escape would be much more difficult than from El Renacer. The Canal is just back there, and organizing a jailbreak at this institution with some support is quite easy. They could be picked up by a fast speedboat and reach international waters, which according to our law is only 12 miles away after we ratified the 1983 Montego Bay Convention on the new international maritime order. We also have an area of 176 miles that is called Exclusive Economic Zone, but our jurisdiction there is on resources on that area that is adjoining to our territorial waters."

At El Renacer there is an open regime, with access to the yard every day, although there are also barred cells. It is said that security is heavy. There are fortified walls guarded by well-armed men, but security is not enough, for in the past common criminals have escaped. Anyone entering must show some ID, is searched and goes through metal detection. The terrorists have the same discipline as common criminals. They can walk around, play parlor games, read the press and make phone calls.

Every day they are visited by accomplices living in Panama and the US, lawyers and relatives. The contact with the terrorists is direct, and there are no obstacles for personal contact. Visitors give them clothing, food and other items. They have medical attention, and if a more specialized one is needed, they are taken to Santo Tomás Hospital or to the Social Security. The terrorists can ask to be taken to San Fernando, a private clinic, which requires the authorization of the Chief of Police.

The defense team is led by narco-lawyer Rogelio Cruz, former Prosecutor General of the Republic of Panama, sacked because of his links to Colombian drug cartels. At present he is closely associated with the Miami mafia. His dealings are increasingly denigrating and he has a direct link with the Cuban American National Foundation. He is bent on obtaining a ruling of house arrest.

According to many, his fee is in the neighborhood of several thousands of dollars.

Since the proceedings began Rogelio Cruz has submitted more than thirty petitions, including preventive actions, precautionary measure, protection, habeas corpus and other dilatory tactics.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs are prestigious professors at the University of Panama's School of Law with plenty of trial experience. They are ethical men of the law. The civil suits are presented together with the prosecution charges.

The preliminary hearing on December 5, 2002 would allow Fifth Criminal Judge Enrique Panizo to determine if the evidence presented by the prosecution and by the plaintiffs was enough for a trial.

PRELIMINARY HEARING, DECEMBER 5, 2002

Preliminary Hearing set for December 5, 2002 was postponed due to an appeal of constitutional rights submitted by Julio Berríos as counselor for the National Workers of Panama's Central Labor Union (CNTP). The petition was heard by the First Superior Court of Justice and on February 23, 2003 was overruled. The ruling was appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice, where it was confirmed on April 30, 2003.

A new date for the preliminary hearing was set and on September 3, 2003, almost ten months later, all parties were convened at Panama's Maritime Court Building. Meanwhile, the defense maneuvered constantly in order to free the terrorists.

PRELIMINARY HEARING, SEPTEMBER 3, 2003

The terrorists arrived at 4 a.m. to Panama's Maritime Court. It was a strategy to avoid the cameras. But the cameramen resorted to their experience and caught the mysterious arrival to the court building.

At dawn there were two groups of bystanders: a representation of the students, indigenous people and workers that could have been killed, and those who arrived from Miami and have dedicated their life to killing. Some shouted: "Jail for Posada and his accomplices." Others feigned indifference and told journalists the usual mantra: "It

was a trap set by Castro.” Among the latter was René Cruz Cruz, with large eye glasses and pronounced frontal baldness that did not favor his looks, grey hair and brown eyes. What René Cruz did not tell journalists was that in 1995 he had been arrested by US authorities in California when he was planning an armed raid on Cuba. Cruz had in his possession a load of weapons and other military equipment. He has been closely linked to Posada Carriles’ terrorist plans.

Another member of the audience at the Maritime Court was Eusebio de Jesús Peñalver Mazorra, a brown eyed, bespectacled black man that walks with a rolling gait. Peñalver also had a part in the above mentioned action against Cuba and was arrested with Cruz. He has funded Posada’s terrorist actions against the Island and assassination attempts on President Fidel Castro. In December, 1999 he was publicly denounced as one of the participants in a failed plot to kill Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

What is there to say about Reynold Rodríguez—tall, blond, a despicable personality—, who apparently went directly to Posada Carriles every time he entered the courtroom? He always carried a file, opened it and spoke in whispers with the expert terrorist, while the latter placed his index finger on his lips ordering him to keep silent. Every day before court was in session the telltale dialog between Reynold and Posada took place. The former was no less than the leader in Puerto Rico of CORU (Coordinator of United Revolutionary Organizations), a terrorist organization that carried out and claimed the authorship of actions, such as the murder of young Carlos Muñiz Varela. Shot to death in 1979. Muñiz promoted travel to Cuba by thousands of young émigrés.

Reynold Rodríguez was in the audience at the trial, but could have been one of the defendants taking into consideration an FBI report that the judge read in court when he mentioned the defendants’ terrorist record, and included him in one of CORU’s operations. He tried to hide his surprise, but was unable to do it. He was not seen in the courtroom in the afternoon session.

They were always together proving what they are: a terrorist army with a long record known by the FBI and US administrations.

José Borrego Amat (aka “El Güiro”) was talking with Mrs. Guillermo Novo and Mrs. Gaspar Jiménez. Because of his face he reminds us of a silent comedy character—cross-eyed with a

permanent leer behind his glasses. El Güiro left Cuba illegally in 1960. In Miami he soon began taking part in counterrevolutionary actions. Soon he was taken to Guatemala to train at Trax Base for the Bay of Pigs invasion. He did not talk about it, but instead boasted that he had composed a song: “You haunted me with your witchcraft; you have me running around day and night.”

Another member of the Miami group was Sergio Gilberto “Perico” Díaz Morejón, 60-odd years old, with a beer gut, grey haired and bald. A Batista follower and Bay of Pigs invader, he was linked to terrorist organizations.¹

Some thirty people including relatives and accomplices arrived to voice their solidarity with the crime, which is what they have been doing all these years.

The Maritime Court, a Neo-Renaissance building surrounded by trees, was heavily guarded. To gain entrance to the courtroom people have to queue up twice –once at the street in front of the court building and then at the entrance. Once there they give their names, and if someone is not listed his or her name is written down. Cell phones and cameras are not allowed inside and women’s handbags are searched. If a person leaves the courtroom for any reason, he or she will not be allowed back in until a recess.

In the court room, the terrorists meet with their relatives and accomplices; they smile, wave and even pat their guards on the back. Apparently they are very well taken care of.

They already know how many media are present and who the Cuban journalists are. How else can anyone explain Pedro Remón’s answer to a question I asked when he was leaving the courtroom?

“This is a trap by *your* government, miss,” said Remón.

“What government?” I asked.

“Yours,” Remón answered.

Because the Cuban Revolution and Fidel has been their target all these years, for them I was not just another journalist.

Judge Enrique Panizo banged his gavel and declared the court in session reading the arraignment, which had been interrupted on December 5, 2003. Yira, the court’s clerk, reminded all about the

¹ Fulgencio Batista, twice a dictator in Cuba, in 1933 and 1952, was overthrown on December 31, 1958 by Fidel Castro’s Rebel Army. The core of Miami’s Cuban extreme right anti-Castro exiles are mostly former Batista’s henchmen.

petition submitted at the previous hearing by lawyer for the plaintiffs Rafael Rodríguez, in which he asked the court read the arraignment, the opposing arguments and the defendants' deposition.

Judge Panizo asked counselor Rodríguez if he insisted on his petition and Rodríguez waived the reading, except for the deposition of José M. Hurtado, Posada's driver.

Lawyer for the defense Rosa Mancilla Cruz, a thin black woman with a small face, impulsive and with certain ability for twisting a story around, requested from the court the reading of Pedro Remón's statement.

As soon as the clerk began reading, Ms Mancilla withdrew her request.

The arraignment was a brief of depositions and investigations submitted by the prosecution. The reading concluded at 12:30 p.m. and Judge Paniza declared a recess.

The public left the courtroom and the terrorists stayed behind; the judge left by the back door and got in his car. It was very hard to tape him.

Outside a representation of students and workers from the University of Panama and Kuna Indians cried out for justice. The Miami visitors played dumb and even heckled the youngster who could have died. Then they hurried to their cars.

César Matamoros, one of the defendants who had been freed by an interim order rejected me when I pointed the microphone at him after asking about his links with the Cuban American National Foundation. A Cuban resident of Panama and owner of Botes Acuatico, he helped Posada in the preparation of the assassination plot against President Fidel Castro and was arrested on November 18, 2000 together with his employee José Manuel Hurtado, who was Posada's driver in Panama.

Matamoros is no newcomer to this kind of plans. He has been linked to violent actions against Cuba by Horacio Salvador García Cordero, a former official of the CANF terrorist organization and a member of the Council for the Freedom of Cuba. In 1989 he was arrested in Panama on drug charges.

Now, arm in arm with Novo's and Jiménez' wives he ducks the camera. He is a violent man, grey haired, approximately 65 years old. Leaving the court room he insulted plaintiff lawyer Julio Berríos and threatened him saying that he could get 200 men to wipe him out.

During the court's recess the Miamians are more interested in speaking about "dictator Fidel Castro" than answering the questions journalists ask about the expectation on the trial. It could very well be evidence of the terrorists' obsession for assassinating the leader of the Cuban Revolution.

At 2:08 p.m. the court reconvenes and Judge Paniza tells the clerk to read articles 2232 and 2234 of the Criminal Code on his mandate for safeguarding the peace.

Lawyers for the defense submit their petition for a summary trial for the sake of procedural economy. The prosecutor and the plaintiffs' lawyers object arguing, among other reasons, the absence of one of the defendants, a fugitive of justice, Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva, a friend of Posada Carriles who brought him some equipment from El Salvador, according to his defense attorney Mr. Velarde, who also objected to a summary trial.

Since there was no agreement, and for the sake of transparency, the objection was sustained.

After an analysis based on the criminal code, Judge Panizo ruled not to accept the summary trial and asked both parties to give their opening statements.

Prosecutor Arquímedes Sáenz began listing each crime and petitioned a summons to trial for Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Crispín Remón, César Matamoros Chacón, Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva and José Manuel Hurtado Vivero. Sáenz cited depositions by José Manuel Hurtado Vivero that detailed the assassination plan against Fidel; by José Valladares, aka Pepe el Cubano —"I told him that they should kill him, but not like that, but with a scope rifle"—, the explosives in the handbag that Posada carried, the reconnoitering of the University of Panama's campus, the denial of the terrorists to submit to DNA testing, the documents found in Posada's room at the Coral Suite Hotel and drafted by Remón and signed by "Cuban Commandos Action and Justice Group."

The prosecutor undid all the lies that the defendants claimed about the defection of Cuban General Eduardo Delgado when he told them that they had kept silent for five months and finally made their statements after reading the prosecution's files and a speech by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque at the Cuban TV program "Round Table" on November 20, 2000.

Silvio Guerra, one of the lawyers for the plaintiffs, made an analysis of the crimes the defendants were charged with and alluded to “the Spanish Criminal Code and jurisprudence as compared law, particularly the theory of ‘possession’, in the sense that dominion of the thing is not indispensable, but that it is sufficient that the relation of the explosive with the subject allows availability.”

He focused on the discovery of the materials for the making of explosives, found at Pepe el Cubano’s Jacú farm near the Panama-Costa Rica border.

He petitioned the summons to trial because the defense had not been able to disprove the discovery of the material found on the Tocumen-Mañanitas empty lot.

Counsel for the defense attempted to attain its goal, but looked very bad. Their words were imprecise, rambling and pompous, a real megalomania, as lawyer Silvio Guerra described them.

Several times Judge Paniza called them to order. Head counsel for the defense Rogelio Cruz accused Judge Paniza of being partial because he read all the investigations included in the arraignment.

Rogelio Cruz, former Prosecutor General during the US military occupation of Panama in 1990, was sacked for his links to drug dealers. He was also a director of First Inter American Bank of Panama, which was controlled by Colombian drug capos Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela and Jorge Luis Ochoa. The bank was almost exclusively dedicated to laundering money from Colombian drug traffic. Rogelio Cruz has been a defender of evil and crime. It was rumored that he was paid thousands and thousands of dollars for the defense of the terrorists. His nephew and his wife were among the four members of the defense team, so most of the money stayed in the family.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs defeated most of the defense lawyers’ petitions.

Judge Paniza called for a recess.

Journalists ran out of the court room to warn their cameramen that the terrorists would emerge any moment. Several exits put us on the alert, and we observed the movement of vans. Two were parked with their doors open and another one almost ran us over. It was Posada’s. Novo jumped over the staircase and shouted in a rage: “Long live free Cuba!” It was the only truth that he had uttered up to the moment at the trial.

Pedro Remón also came out angry. A decisive moment in his life was nearing: walking the street as usual or behind bars for quite some time.

Their cars sped by and other followed close behind.

The prosecutor declared to the media at the Maritime Court that “the Prosecutor’s Office will not rest until it presents all the evidence.”

Rogelio Cruz evaded the question that he had already answered in the court room, when he admitted to me that his clients would be summoned to trial. Of course, there was no camera present to tape his declaration.

The court building, located on a hillside, is emptied little by little. At the makeshift press room everyone is certain that the defendants will be summoned to trial.

September 5, 2003

At 9:25 a.m. the court reconvened for the session in which Judge Paniza would rule on the trial summons.

Of those who had arrived from Miami only the wives remained. The seats reserved for them in the court room were empty. The terrorists did not look as confident as in previous days. There was concern in their faces. Students, workers, Indians and journalists were in their respective places.

The classic sound of the gavel is heard, and Judge Paniza orders counsel to present their closing statements

Plaintiff lawyer Julio Berríos told the court about the record of terrorist acts by the defendants, “which the court should evaluate and ponder, for Panama is party to international agreements that condemn said acts.”

Berríos said that “there is neither sense nor logic to the declaration that their intention was the defection of a top officer of the Cuban Intelligence,” for they had said that they did not even knew the alleged deserter. He also spoke about the existence of other crimes committed by the defendants, besides those of which they have been accused.”

He asked for a summons to trial for all the defendants, “for they are international criminals sold to the highest bidder and whose goal was the operation named ‘David vs. Goliath’ to assassinate Fidel Castro.”

Subsequently lawyer Ascario Morales clarifies that “his participation as a lawyer for the plaintiffs deals with the dignity of his indigenous people, who condemn acts of terrorism and demand justice, particularly because three chiefs who are important leaders of Kuna Yala were present on that day at the University of Panama.” Morales said that “the crimes for which they were investigated have been proven, but the prosecution has not taken others into account, such as Against the Personality of the State, Against the Property, and that the court should evaluate.” He spoke against privileges enjoyed by the defendants at El Renacer Prison.

Lawyer Ascario demanded that a trial be summoned.

Judge Paniza called for a recess. The murmurs in the court room were hardly heard, compared to the previous day. Now the terrorist spoke among themselves, or rather Posada, Remón and Novo. For reasons I never knew Gaspar Jiménez kept to himself. It seemed there were problems among them.

Rogelio Cruz paced up and down a hall talking into his cell phone. He was probably conferring with the “other world”, where the money was coming from. The pay was in danger. Plans for leaving for Miami from the court room were disappearing every minute.

There was a mysterious man that always carried a briefcase. I asked him his opinion about what we all saw in the court room and he answered disdainfully: “I don’t do interviews.”

Later I knew that he was Ernesto Abreu, who this time had the mission of group manager, a representative or delegate of terrorists Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos and Santiago Álvarez, directors of the “Posada Carriles Support Group”, financed by fund raising through Miami radio.

He seemed now to be Reynold Rodriguez’s aide.

Everywhere I looked I saw a history of plots, of dirty war. I was not able to get interviews; they rejected me over and over because I was “sent by Castro”. That was what a very rude old lady called me without letting me put in a word, gesticulating with her hands in front of my face. I thanked them and kept on reflecting the truth I had learned through the years. How much hate for a man and a project, both equally humane!

They were the usual bitter people, those who abandoned their country because they could not stand that the doors would open for

all, because they were sick with power, the power of the few that trample over the many.

This was the first trial I had ever witnessed and it would leave an imprint on my heart. I was before the names with faces, and their gaze showed the coldness of their souls.

Posada is the prototype of the killer. He never looks you in the eye and always is scheming. He is the first to speak and the others do so after him. Whenever he pleases, he orders everyone to shut up. He plays the part of a nice old man who is too feeble to look after himself, but only for a few minutes, and there is always a gesture that gives him away. He walks at a brisk pace and does not allow to be taken by the arm.

Pedro Remón is the youngest of all —tall, dark haired, with a wide forehead and a mustache. He is something of a spokesman for Posada, a kind of go between that has known how to live off the tree he leans on. He looks like the thug he is. In the conspiracy for killing Fidel he had, among other missions, the drafting of the documents for claiming the assassination, and later on the false version published in *Panamá América* on the Cuban general's defection. A Panamanian newspaper made a lot of money while the terrorists were in a Panamanian jail.

Guillermo Novo is explosive, and it seems as if the bombings he has done had altered his nervous system. He is easily roused and the judge several times called him to order for losing his temper. Novo is thin, has little hair and a long face. He is always ready for a fight: the slightest hint and all the hate he keeps inside boils over.

Police security around the court building is in contrast with the defendants, who are dressed in suits and are not handcuffed. Why the display if the terrorists are inside and not outside?

The afternoon session begins at 2 with the statement by defense lawyer Ana Belfon, a heavy set mulatto woman with a violent sound in her voice. In her closing statement she asked for a dismissal in favor of José Manuel Hurtado, Posada's driver in Panama. According to Ms Belfon, Hurtado found himself in a "circumstantial situation."

Emilio Royo Linares, defense lawyer for César Matamoros, said in his closing statement that "the case has great political connotations that cannot be dismissed", and that "although his client told Hurtado to get rid of the handbag, he did it ignoring what it was all

about, for the driver told him that he had seen a strange something in the handbag.”

Judge Paniza informed about a writ presented by head counsel Rogelio Cruz about the use of backup equipment to support his statement and the one by Rosa Mancilla de Cruz.

Prosecutor Arquímides Sáenz objected the use of the audiovisual equipment, for he “ignores its content, and besides it is not yet the probation stage.”

Lawyers for the plaintiff also objected the use of the equipment for being irrelevant and a surprise action.

Judge Panizo, following to the letter Panamanian procedures, said that “the court does not know what is going to be shown”, and sustained the objection. He asked Rosa Mancilla to proceed with the closing statement as the others had done.

Ms. Mancilla said that her statement would take one hour for each defendant, but the judge told her that the rule was “one hour in all, not one hour for each defendant.”

Wearing a lapel microphone, she said that “it was illogical to even think that they would plant explosives at the University, so close by to the hotel where they were staying, and even more illogical that they would have the car washed when they knew they had explosives in the vehicle.

Her statement was a parade in the runway, as a local journalist called it. More than a defense, she acknowledged that they were experts, but claimed that there were no grounds for a trial, neither by the facts nor by the law.

Now is Rogelio Cruz’s turn to ramble. One would not have to be a lawyer to see the feeble arguments he had for attempting to convince. In closing, he said that “I know what the judge’s decision is, and I ask him to prove in this act his summon to trial, and not in the coldness of his chambers.” By his expression, he was also summoning them to trial.

At 7:07 p.m. Judge Paniza called for a two hour recess, after which he would inform of his ruling.

We all left the court room with the exception of the defendants. Rogelio Cruz was not the only one convinced of the summons to trial, for even journalists who on the first day were skeptic were already broadcasting the news. For three days they had listened to pleas, inspections, lab reports on the material found and that later

was submitted to a more rigorous examination that found it was military issue C-4 explosive.

At 9:00 p.m. the judge began the grading of the summary, spoke about the relevance of preliminary investigations by the appropriate authorities and the ample gamut of evidence that he termed of the utmost legal importance.

Judge Paniza mentioned the depositions by officers from the Judicial Technical Police and the National Police that were part of the operations and those by José Manuel Hurtado, the driver. He mentioned the trip by the defendants through Chiriquí province and to the farm of Pepe el Cubano, who died during the legal process.

He also reminded that: “In this hearing there has been talk—and the court has always been respectful of due process— about the alleged innocence of the defendant. We will not analyze questions of depth, but only will focus on what has been proven. The records of each defendant that have been included, particularly of the foreign nationals, in relation to illicit actions in other countries, those we will not examine.”

Judge Paniza mentioned the accusation by the Embassy of El Salvador of the false identity of Franco Rodríguez Mena and the note from the US Embassy that said that Gaspar Jiménez was in possession of a false passport in the name of Manuel Díaz.

For more than two hours, Judge Paniza showed that “there was enough legal merit to order a summons to trial against Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and Luis Posada Carriles for the charges of possession of explosives, provided by Law 53 of December 12, 1995; against the collective security that implies common danger, provided by Title VII, Chapter I of Book II of the Criminal Code; and forgery of documents in general, provided by Title VIII, Chapter I of Book II of the Criminal Code.”

The court ruled a provisional dismissal in relation to Francisco Arrocha Murillo, José Manuel Hurtado’s nephew, and Concepción Figueroa Rojas, a neighbor.

“The court has examined and studied the 43 volumes; it has not been an easy task,” Paniza said.

In relation to the precautionary measure requested by counsel Ana Belfon on behalf of her client José Manuel Hurtado, Judge Paniza considered that the charges against him that have merited an inves-

tigation, do not allow for the time being the substitution of preventive arrest by another measure.

In this manner, the Fifth Circuit Judge of the First Judicial circuit of Panama, “administering justice on behalf of the Republic and under the authority of the law, orders the trial of Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Crispín Remón, José Manuel Hurtado Vivero, César Andrés Matamoros Chacón y Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva.”

Based on Article 2222 of the Judicial Code, Judge Paniza set the dates for ordinary hearings on November 12, 13 and 14, and the dates for alternative hearings on January 21, 22, and 23, 2004.

Court was adjourned at 11:55 p.m. The terrorists, who had planned to celebrate the New Year in Miami, went back to El Renacer. Lawyers for the defense evaded journalists. Outside the court building students, indigenous people and workers waved the same flags with which they had welcomed Fidel at the Auditorium. They were now waving them for justice.

PANIZA DECLARES HIMSELF INCOMPETENT

Pressures on Judge Enrique Paniza were constant after the hearings. Chief Counsel for the defense Rogelio Cruz submitted three writs to have Paniza ousted from the trial –on January and July, 2002, and in November, 2003. Judge Paniza never accepted bribes, in spite of proposals from Miami, who according to rumors were as high as half a million dollars. Paniza was also pressured from high up to speed up the process.

He began to feel concerned about retaliation on the part of the defendants and their accomplices.

Rogelio Cruz submitted a complaint of bias and requested that Paniza declare himself incompetent.

On December 12, 2004, Fifth Criminal Judge Enrique Paniza, after three years of presiding over the process, declared himself incompetent.

Rogelio Cruz always insisted on slowing down the process through legal requests. In all logic his fees would grow proportionally to his legal trickery.

On December 15, 2003 first substitute judge José A. Hoo Justiniani was appointed and the date set for the trial, November 12, 13, and 14, 2003, was postponed. Judge Hoo set the date for an ordinary hearing on March 15 to 19, 2004, and as alternate dates April 19 to 23.

THE TRIAL

It began on March 15, at 10:05 a.m. at Panama' Maritime Court Building, in the middle of the city. Relatives of the victims of crimes by Posada, Remón, Novo and Jiménez arrived from Cuba hoping to see justice done.

Each one stared to the ones in front; those in front apparently were unknown. Lisset, daughter of Cuban fishery expert Artaignan Díaz, murdered in Mérida, watched his father's murderer.

A man with a humble face heard the judge who spoke about his brother Eulalio, Pedro Remón's murder victim. The judge read all the crimes committed by the terrorists. Domingo stared at Remón, who shot his brother to death, Cuban diplomat Félix Rodríguez, in New York.

Cremata was in the court room, Posada Carriles burned his father to death when he bombed the Cubana Airlines plane in Barbados. Now facing him and in silence he was invoking justice.

In the vicinity of the Maritime Court Building, reporters from several press agencies and TV chains from all over the world met each other again.

For the time being, the spotlight was on the new judge. José A. Hoo Justiniani made his entrance without looking to the cameras, while journalists tried to get his attention. He was very young and this was his first experience in this type of case.

The search on entering the courtroom was repeated. Substitute Judge Hoo broke the ice.

"I was informed that I had been assigned the case in mid December, when I was on vacation. There were 44 volumes to be read related to the case and I had to solve the record of evidence, both of which I did in a month and a half".

He read the rules of procedure and warned against "inappropriate manifestations."

Subsequently he asked each of the defendants whether they pleaded guilty or not guilty of the charges. Incredibly they all declared themselves not guilty. How could this people who have dedicated their lives to kill and divulge the crimes they have committed be such cowards?

Suddenly Guillermo Novo stood up and pointed to Rafael Rodríguez, a lawyer of the plaintiffs, and shouted: “You are the criminal!” The outburst was in answer to a reading by Rodríguez of the FBI’s declassified documents that listed the crimes committed by the Novo brothers.

Judge Hoo was emphatic when he read each line, as if passing sentence. The years of evil were too many so as to permit so much savagery.

Posada Carriles, at 78, was dressed like a groom. He wore an off-white suit that set him apart from the rest, who were dressed in dark colors,

Court is adjourned. The cameramen tried to focus on the terrorists’ angry faces, but it is hard. Guards run beside them like protecting partners.

Detainees of that sort travel in large barred vans, but once again Suzukis 4 x 4 took them through Panama City, guarded by their wives and others, always behind the scenes.

At one o’clock the court reconvenes. Judge Hoo orders silence and warns that anyone who laughs or alters internal order will be taken out of the court room and will not be allowed back. He also warns everyone to turn their cell phones off. This is a problem for defense counsel Rogelio Cruz, for every time the prosecutor speaks of evidence, he leaves the courtroom to communicate —probably up North— that things are not going well. He hides between two trees, but his face gives him away.

A score of accomplices that could very well have been tried in a US or Central American court arrived from Miami in solidarity with the terrorist cause. The day the sentence was going to be passed they disappeared from the courtroom and it was said that many had already gone home.

Posada Carriles looks detached from the history that goes through his head. If he forgets something, the judge reminds him every minute of his crimes while he is reading his record.

Pedro Remón smiles at his lawyer Rosa Mancilla de Cruz, as if he were assuring her that lies are all right.

Gaspar Jiménez seems upset with his terrorist partners: he is always alone and indifferent. He wears dark glasses to protect himself from Prosecutor Saenz's tirades.

Outside the court building students, workers, and Panamanian aborigines ask that the terrorists be jailed. They have been there since the first preliminary hearing. The Cuban denunciation saved their lives.

Closing arguments are over. Judge Hoo orders a recess and announces court will reconvene in the evening.

At the makeshift press room, the debate is about the length of the sentence, for everyone is certain of the verdict. Pepe el Cubano's confession that they should assassinate Fidel with a scope rifle and the deposition by Posada's driver were facts that according to journalists carried a lot of weight.

The wives that arrived from Miami were only interviewed by those who were willing to accept their rehearsed stories. I spoke with Mrs. Novo about the crimes committed by her husband. She answered that those were lies, propaganda by *Granma*². She was very surprised when I showed her the FBI declassified documents. When later on I asked her for an interview, she refused.

In the courtroom, the Miamians were seated to the left; in the center were the students, indigenous people, workers and relatives of the terrorists' victims; to the right was the press.

Pedro Remón was no longer smiling at his lawyer, Posada Carriles gnashed his teeth and bit his tongue, over and over, Novo Sampoll brushed imaginary lint off his jacket as an evasion, and Gaspar Jiménez looked at Judge Hoo out of the corner of his eye.

Rogelio Cruz's thousands of dollars were in danger. The narco-lawyer insisted on the innocence of the defendants, but his face, redder than usual, belied him.

The trial against international terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Crispín Remón and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo was coming to an end.

Outside the court building everyone was waiting for the very well dressed defendants. Suddenly they ran out of the building and climbed into their luxury cars. Even the guards wore suits.

² The official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party.

The Venezuelan Ambassador in Panama Claudio Granados was present at the trial and told the press that his country would request the immediate extradition of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, wanted by Venezuelan justice, who had escaped from prison in his country while awaiting trial for the bombing of the Cuban airliner in Barbados.

Apparently these were the last hours of a criminal process characterized by the defense's trickeries for obtaining the freedom of hired assassins, protected now by two governments who were allies in the non-war on terrorism —Panama and the United States. And what could be said of the pressures from those who came from Miami and met with Panamanian authorities to bribe them and make them their accomplices?

Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos himself published an article in *El Mambí*, "the voice of the Cuban people" (of course, in Miami) in which he described the actions with the Panamanian government to "hasten and obtain a definite solution for our fellow countrymen detained since November 19, 2001."

"From the moment of our arrival," he wrote, "the first steps were to obtain permission to visit Luis Posada Carriles and Pedro Crispín Remón at the military prison in the capital city, and subsequently at the one known as Renacer, about an hour away, to visit brothers Gaspar Jiménez and Guillermo Novo.

"We were able to see them almost on a daily basis, offer them complete solidarity and total support, as well as display an intense series of contacts, interviews and meetings at different political, police and government levels.

"Many were the meetings with representative Panamanian figures from different sectors of the nation. It should be pointed out the long and promising meeting with Vice President of the Republic Arturo Vallarino; with chief of National Police and Security Carlos Barés; the head of Panama's penitentiary system Ms. Concepción Corro de Tello; with former minister of the Torrijos government and leader of the Panamanian Revolutionary Party (PRD), at present a journalist, and who as one of the five members of the Foreign Policy Commission of the Panamanian government submitted a request to deny the extradition to Cuba of the defendants, which was accepted."

Further on Castro wrote: "We hope the trial is held on April and we expect the acquittal of all, for the charge of homicide was dropped."

Who is Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos, the author of the article?

In the early 1970s he was an active member of the terrorist group Revolutionary Board in Exile, and Coordinator of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU), the latter created by Orlando Bosch and responsible for numerous terrorist actions against Cuban civilian and business targets in several countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Since 1977 he was a member of DISIP, the Venezuelan Service of Intelligence and Prevention. He was closely linked with terrorists Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, and served as their liaison with Miami counterrevolutionaries when they were in prison for the bombing of the Cuban airliner in Barbados on October, 1976.

From 1979 to 1982, Castro Matos traveled to Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, allegedly on behalf of Venezuelan DISIP, but really to promote contacts for his terrorist actions.

In the 1980s he was involved in assassination plots against Cuban President Fidel Castro. In 1982 he was one of the main leaders of Independent and Democratic Cuba. He moved to Miami in 1983.

In July 1992 he planned the bombing of Cuban ships in the Dominican Republic and was linked to the terrorist organization National Democratic Unity Party (PUND), led by Sergio González Rosquete, who was also linked to drug traffic. In 1997 Castro Matos created Cuban National Resistance for the promotion of violent actions against civilian and economic targets in Cuba.

Due to his personal relations with terrorist Jorge "Tinguaro" Rodríguez Macías, in February 1998 he raised money to fund an armed infiltration in Cuba. In 1998 he founded the People's Party to serve as cover for his true links to terrorism. In mid 1998 he traveled to Central America where he met Luis Posada Carriles, gave him logistical support and served as liaison with other terrorists in Miami and other countries.

Castro Matos was involved in the plot for the assassination of President Fidel Castro during the 10th Iberian American Summit in Panama.

He was a frequent traveler to Panama to visit the detained terrorists. Together with other Cuban counterrevolutionaries from Miami he paid for the legal expenses and participated in the planning of an eventual prison break for Posada. Nelsy Ignacio Castro with other

known Cuban born terrorists, still has plans for violent actions against Cuba and its leaders. He continues to send emissaries to the island with means and resources to supply the execution of violent actions in the country.

He organized and led, together with terrorist Santiago Álvarez, an armed infiltration on April 26, 2001 at Villa Clara's north coast, an action where Máximo Pradera Valdés, Ihosvanni Surís de la Torre and Santiago Padrón Quintero were caught, all with side arms and explosives and who planned to bomb Cuban tourist centers.

This terrorist entered and left Panama at his own free will, and as he himself said, met with the highest Panamanian authorities in order to buy the freedom of part of his troops.

The trial against the international terrorists who planned the assassination of Cuban President Fidel Castro in Panama was pending sentencing.

There was already talk of a presidential pardon and of the escape of the terrorists from El Renacer, the prison the Americans used at the time of the invasion for jailing the military who committed crimes.

In mid April, 2004, Judge José A. Hoo issued Sentence No. 28.

He mentioned records, proven facts, legal arguments, and in his ruling sentenced Luis Posada Carriles and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo to EIGHT YEARS OF PRISON AND AN EQUAL PERIOD OF DISQUALIFICATION FROM PUBLIC OFFICE, AS GUILTY OF CRIMES AGAINST COLLECTIVE SECURITY, WHICH IMPLY COMMON DANGER, and FORGERY OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS.

Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Crispín Remón and César Andrés Matamoros Chacón were sentenced to SEVEN YEARS OF PRISON AND AN EQUAL PERIOD OF DISQUALIFICATION FROM PUBLIC OFFICE, AS GUILTY OF CRIMES AGAINST COLLECTIVE SECURITY, WHICH IMPLY COMMON DANGER, and José Manuel Hurtado Vivero, the driver, to FOUR YEARS OF PRISON AND AN EQUAL PERIOD OF DISQUALIFICATION FROM PUBLIC OFFICE AS PRIMARY ACCESORY OF THE CRIME AGAINST COLLECTIVE SECURITY, WHICH IMPLIES COMMON DANGER.

Judge Hoo dismissed the charges of Illicit Association for Committing a Crime, and Possession of Explosives.

Apparently for Judge Hoo, in order to punish the criminals, the C-4 explosives should have exploded, Panama should have declared a national mourning, and Cuba should have wept.

If Judge Hoo said that Paniza was mistaken in accepting the charges of Illicit Association for Committing a Crime, and Possession of Explosives, I say that only his inexperience could justify Judge Hoo's unprofessional actions.

How can he accept the crime against collective security, which implies common danger, if he wiped out the means to carry out their intention to assassinate President Castro? Indeed, he did not take into account the introduction of the explosives in Panama, thus ignoring legal principles.

Judge Hoo also dismissed the terrorists' past history, which shows their "association" to commit international crimes.

He contradicted himself when he said that "the defendants are charged with wanting to do away with President Fidel Castro's life". And yet that was the defendants' main goal, and Panamanian justice never accused them of it.

The mistakes by the Fifth Circuit Criminal Judge of Panama's First Judicial Circuit did not prevent the terrorists from being tried and returned to El Renacer to serve their sentences.

Judge Hoo said that the time they had been arrested would be deducted from the sentences, so that some of them would be released in four years, other in three, and the driver would go free.

The University of Panama's Auditorium could have been a common grave, but thanks to President Fidel Castro's timely accusation, it became the tomb of terrorism.

Instead, on the evening of November 18, 2000, the Auditorium dressed up with the smiles and the rejoicing of hundreds of students, workers and aborigines that had invited Fidel to share the solidarity of the Panamanian people.

If the plot had not been foiled, "the artifact would had been detonated from the parking lot of the Civil Service Department, thus causing the greatest act of terrorism of all times in the hemisphere."

The above was the conclusion of Prosecutor Argentina Barrera when she told me in an interview that she only had to decipher the letters "A.P." in one of the sketches found by the police. According to forensics analysis, the handwriting was Remón's.

One morning Argentina was walking by the Civil Service building and she noticed that on top it had the letters A.P., a large parking space a safe distance away from the Auditorium, but with a visual that would allow the detonation of the explosives.

Auditorium is the history of a failed assassination that could have filled with desolation thousands of Cuban and Panamanian families, such as Nancy's, up in a hill, where a child does not playfully run because he was never born.

Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo. The Crime in Merida.

Artaignan Díaz, a fishery expert from Cuba's Caribbean Shrimp Fleet, would have returned to the island in two days when he was murdered in Merida, Mexico. All were waiting anxiously for him at home, for he had been working away for two years. Suddenly, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo turned Díaz's wife into a widow, and their three children into orphans.

The infamous terrorists destroyed the life of another Cuban family who instead of welcoming a husband and father received his corpse at the airport.

One day I went to Habana del Este to hear the Díaz family story. Before me stood a woman who looked 80. Later I knew she was Francisca, Díaz's widow, and that she was only 63.

"You'd better write down your questions," said Lisset, the youngest daughter, "because she can't hear. She is deaf from diabetes. Since my father was murdered and she heard about the way he died, she became very upset and never was again the joyful woman we all knew. She must have hemodialysis three times a week."

Grandson Ariel looks sadly at grandmother Francisca with his big blue eyes.

"How do you remember Artaignan?"

"He was very concerned about his family, a hard working man. Imagine, when he was murdered we hadn't seen him for two years. Those murderers killed him and us too. My grandson asks about his grandfather and all I say to him is that he was very brave."

Could you show me a photo, some remembrance of Artaignan?

“We treasure an album with photos and press clippings from Mexico with the news of the crime. My daughter Lisset will get it.”

Lisset asks me to end the interview. Esperanza, the oldest, follows the conversation attentively. The family doctor arrives and takes Francisca blood pressure. It is high.

At the dining room table I look at the album made by Mexican friends with clippings from the newspapers *Novedades de Yucatán* and *El Diario de Yucatán*. One day they brought it to Francisca. It tells the story of the terrorist act by Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and Orestes Ruiz Hernández. *Novedades* said:

“On July 23, 1976, Cuban Consul Daniel Ferrer arrived in the afternoon to a radio repair shop on 54A Street between 65 and 67. He was accompanied by Artaignan. Ferrer was told that the radio repairman was at El Gran Chaparral Bar.

“The diplomat went to the bar and after meeting with the man that was going to repair his car’s radio returned to the street. When he reached his car he was held at gunpoint, but managed to get away.

“In the attempt to kidnap Cuban diplomat Daniel Ferrer, fishery expert Artaignan Díaz Díaz was shot several times. He fell in a pool of blood flowing from his neck, the abdomen and the lumbar region.”

The newspaper also said that “at the capital’s Benito Juárez airport Judicial Federal Police officers arrested Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo.

“According to the police, Gaspar Jiménez said that ‘the explosives in the hands of the group had been programmed for a bombing of the Cuban Consulate in Mexico City’.”

Diario de Yucatán denounced an international plot masterminded from Miami by Orlando Bosch.

While I look at the album Ailet, Adrián and Ariel fool around with their grandmother who hardly hears them, but understands them. Esperanza, Artaignan’s eldest daughter, tells me that she had not wanted to be at the wake.

“I didn’t have the heart to do it. I always waited for my father alive and I couldn’t understand why it had to be that way.”

The three children —Lisset, Esperanza and Enrique— grew up with the grief for their father's absence. Lisset remembers that an aunt said: "He is in pieces, he is in pieces."

Mexicans friends stayed with Artaignan after his death, stood a guard of honor. Thanks to them , the story reached Francisca. She exists, but has not lived again.

"What do you want for your husband's murderers?"

"That justice be done some day, What else can I ask? He was the greatest thing, and now he is no more."

Lisset adds: "We don't want blood nor revenge, only the support of honest people all over the world, their solidarity in the battle against impunity and for justice."

Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and Orestes Ruiz Hernández admitted their guilt in a Mexican court. In March, 1977, Gaspar Jiménez escaped from jail with the help of Mexican drug dealers. The murder went unpunished.

Many could have had an experience similar to that of Francisca in Panama if the assassination of Fidel Castro had been successful at the University's Auditorium. Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo was one of the main actors, but he has always been accompanied by Posada Carriles in every assassination plot against Fidel.

Protected Prison Break

“Good Morning, Mr. Ambassador, this is the President to inform you that the four Cubans were already pardoned yesterday evening and that they already left the country. Three are on their way to Miami, and the other one, well, with an unknown destination. Good bye. I embrace you.”

The message was left by Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso in Simon Ferro’s answering machine. Ferro was the US ambassador to Panama from 1999 to 2001.

The message was aired by a Miami TV station, the same channel that later broadcast the arrival of the terrorists to the lair where they have always been protected.

On August 25, 2004, President Mireya Moscoso signed Decree 317 pardoning the four international terrorists tried and convicted by a Panamanian court to eight, seven and four years in jail.

The sentence was in the process of appeal, therefore President Moscoso could not legally pardon them.

Panama has signed several international conventions against terrorism, so it must fight and look for the cooperation of other countries in the matter.

The Decree confirmed the truth of Cuba’s denunciations about the serious consequences for the credibility of that country if the terrorists were released one way or another, as pointed out in the declaration of the Cuban government on the severance of relations with Panama.

The presidential pardon had been cooked up for some time, back at the time of the visits by US Secretary of State Colin Powell to

Panama in December 2003, as well as with secret meetings of Moscoso's sister Ruby with the terrorists themselves.

On several occasions Panamanian newspapers published the real reasons for the arrival of Secretary Powell to Panama. *El Siglo* said that his presence was due to a message from President Bush that he was interested that the terrorists be tried *in absentia*.

Internet sites published that according to sources related to President Moscoso, Powell had told her that the "US government was interested in a trial in which the Cubans were favored, and not the prosecution and plaintiffs."

In January, 2004 Otto Reich arrived in Panama. Reich was involved together with Posada Carriles in Colonel Oliver North's team in the Iran-Contra scandal in 1980.

Reich met with the Coordinator of Panama's National Security Council. Among other matters he suggested the best manner to deal with the Posada Carriles case. The Coordinator guaranteed that the pardon for the terrorists would be granted before the end of President Moscoso's term.

The very lawyers for the defense told Panamanian news media that Panama's Foreign Minister Harmodio Arias had told them that during Reich's visit to Panama the President promised that she would end the process as soon as they were sentenced.

Those arguments would be enough to show, as Panamanian lawyer Lucho Gómez said, that Mireya Moscoso acted more as a Miami resident than as President of Panama. In Miami she was building the house she would live in once her presidential term of office was over.

In late April, 2004, President Moscoso ordered judicial authorities to treat with urgency the appeal process, and decided that "if for any legal maneuver or any other cause the process was delayed, she would pardon the defendants even if the sentence was still on appeal."

Sources at El Renacer Prison—and there is word that it was one of the prisoners himself—expressed that the best possibility they had was a presidential pardon, and although pressures from Miami were increasing, their concern was about the delay of the President to pardon them once and for all."

In July, while on a private visit to Miami. President Moscoso was pressured to act by top officials in the Bush Administration and by the Cuban American National Foundation.

News sources claimed that in late July one of the defense lawyers visited the Panamanian Ministry of Foreign Relations and learned of the presidential pardon.

According to Internet sites, “a source close to Colin Powell commented in confidence that in July, 2004, Secretary Powell had told him that Ms Moscoso, Minister of Government and Justice Arnulfo Escalona, Chief of Police and Migration Carlos Barés and Mrs. Barés, and Minister of Domestic Commerce Joaquín Jacomé would be denied visas if they did not comply with the request of freeing the Cubans imprisoned in Panama.”

Later on, in August, the executive office agreed unanimously to grant a presidential pardon to the participants in the assassination plot against President of Cuba Fidel Castro.

Contrary to legal procedure, the pardon was drafted without the participation of the General Direction of the Prison System.

Panamanian news media began reporting that President Moscoso was drafting the pardon for the Cubans jailed at El Renacer. Nevertheless, in Miami there was a rumor that the pardon would be on August 26 and that they would leave by Albrook Airport.

Subsequently, Panama TV stations aired a video on the freeing of the terrorists. This happened after the Prosecutor’s Office issued an order forbidding Minister of Government Arnulfo Escalona and other officials from leaving the country due to irregularities in the release from prison of the international terrorists.

Prosecutor Arquímedes Sáenz declared that the former officials violated procedures by releasing Posada, Pedro Remón, Gaspar Jiménez and Guillermo Novo on the morning of August 26, when they personally went to their cells at El Renacer looking for them.

The Prosecutor’s order included former chief of Police Carlos Barés, deputy director of Migration Javier Tapia, and head of Police Investigation Division Arnulfo Escobar.

The aired video was taped through security cameras at Tocumen International Airport. There are images of the terrorists going through Immigration accompanied by Barés, Tapia and Escobar at the cargo section of the airport. Former chief of Police Carlos Barés is seen holding a friendly conversation with Posada and Remón. While documents are processed, they were seen eating sandwiches and drinking fruit juice.

Those that claim that Posada is just a sick old man would be shocked seeing him squatting for several minutes while talking on a telephone, probably to the beyond. His good physical condition is something to talk about.

The papers were processed in half an hour, and from there they went aboard two private jets —Posada in one and the rest on the other.

On one of the planes Gaspar was waited on by his wife, a heavyset blond with large eyes, who after a moment came out to hug chief of Police Carlos Barés and kiss him good bye.

Well informed sources claim that the planes were hired and paid for by well known anti Cuba individuals living in the US and Europe. Among the names mentioned are Leopoldo Fernández Pujals, Jorge Mas Santos, from the Cuban American National Foundation, Santiago Álvarez and other members of the Council for the Liberty of Cuba

In the last days of August, Honduran authorities announced that the terrorists left Panama and made a stopover at the northern city of San Pedro Sula. Only three of them —Remón, Novo and Jiménez— continued their trip to Miami.

Honduran news media published several reports about the search for Posada Carriles in that country.

According to a report by EFE news agency on September 1, “President of Honduras Ricardo Maduro, who is in Panama for the inauguration of new President Martín Torrijos, has repeated that if Posada Carriles is in Honduras he will be treated like a common criminal and deported, because he entered the country in an illegal manner.” EFE also said that “In Honduras several sectors consider that Maduro’s administration is acting under double standards and believe that Posada entered the country with the authorities’ consent.”

A Member of Parliament of the leftist Democratic Unification Party told EFE that “the government uses double standards, first saying that it fights terrorism that attempts to execute violent actions against the people, but then looks the other way in the case of Posada Carriles. It is unexplainable that one week after Posada entered this country the police say that it has no idea about his whereabouts and now it is saying that he has left for Bahamas.”

She stressed that everything points to a plot of the government, Immigration and the Police to allow Posada to enter the country.

PRESIDENT OF PANAMA MIREYA MOSCOSO GETS FOUR MILLION DOLLARS FOR PARDONING TERRORISTS

The terrorists' pardon was brokered in Miami by Ruby Moscoso, the President's sister, in exchange for \$4 million dollars, according to several Internet sites. It was also revealed that the forged documents used by Posada Carriles for traveling out of Panama were delivered by the US Embassy in that country,

Rebellion.com reported that the money was paid to the Moscoso sisters as payment for a business transaction through a bank in Liechtenstein, the European tax haven. The operation was led by Pedro Gómez, a Cuban-American linked to Miami's Mellon United National Bank. Gómez was also in charge of paying the Panamanian lawyers for the defense, headed by narco-counselor Rogelio Cruz.

Pedro Gómez was present at the trial and always carried a mysterious looking black attaché case. He was also part of the so called "Committee for the Freedom of our Jailed Brothers in Panama", which raised money in Miami to fund the defense. "The Banker" is a member of the organization led by Ramón Saúl Sánchez, whose actions together with Remón in Omega 7 terrorist organization are well known.

Former president Mireya Moscoso also received from Miami accomplices the gift of a 2005 Lincoln Town Crown, valued at \$125,000 dollars.

A report by Raúl Gómez in Rebellion.com mentions Chief of Police Barés' links with Posada Carriles, according to information from Panamanian judicial sources that indicate that since September 2002 Barés was closely related to the terrorists and began to intercede on their behalf.

On two occasions, at the time of the preliminary hearing and during the trial, I was able to get Barés cell telephone number through a friend. I called him asking for an interview about the operation for arresting the criminals. Both times he evaded a firm answer –"I'll call you back"; "Sure, I'll call you". Subsequently, everything was much clearer.

The terrorists' move to El Renacer was Barés' idea, with Moscoso's OK to grant them better living conditions. It was Barés who obtained

authorization for Posada and Novo to be treated at a private clinic—Santo Tomás—that was not the proper one for them.

The former chief of Panamanian Police met on several occasions with Miami terrorists Nelsy Ignacio Castro Matos and Santiago Álvarez.

Several news media reported the visits by an American known as “John” who came and went as he pleased at El Renacer, as well as at police headquarters and the US Embassy. Barés met with John and offered his office so that alleged OAS officials met with the terrorists.

Raúl Gómez reported on Rebellion.com that a source at El Renacer Prison claimed that on February 27, 2004, the terrorists were warned by Barés and Arnulfo Escobar, the latter head of the Police Investigations and Information Division, who told them that they knew of plans for a prison break. They told them not to escape and advised them to wait for the verdict, for they would be found not guilty or be pardoned later on.

Barés had the complete trust of President Moscoso and had been her bodyguard and chauffeur. He was involved in arms and drug trafficking and other dirty business. Barés is thought to be an uncultured and little esteemed person. There is no doubt about his complicity with the Panamanian government for pardoning the terrorists.

STATEMENT BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT ON THE BREAKING-OFF OF RELATIONS WITH PANAMA

“In spite of repeated alerts from Cuba, President of Panama Mireya Moscoso has proceeded in a cunning and shameful manner to sign Decree 317, dated on August 25, for the pardoning of the four Cuban born terrorists arrested, tried and convicted in Panama for the planning of an assassination attempt against President Fidel Castro in November, 2000.

“The decree was in force as of this morning, only a few hours after our Ambassador, comrade Carlos Zamora Rodríguez, left Panamanian territory after being expelled by Panamanian authorities in the framework of a maneuver designed to create conditions for the release of terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Pedro Remón Rodríguez.

“The Decree confirms the seriousness and veracity of Cuba’s denunciations, which from the very first moment when they were arrested on November 17, 2000 has been alerting Panamanian authorities, both publicly and through diplomatic channels, about the serious consequences for Panama’s credibility if the terrorists were released one way or the other.

“Cuba’s denunciations were more direct from August 14, when our government had the certainty, based on precise and exact information available, that the terrorists would be pardoned by the outgoing Panamanian President.

“This last action by President Moscoso, in conspiracy with the United States government and Miami’s terrorist mafia, with only a week left in office, is the culmination of the commitment process with terrorism against Cuba and with the protection of the above mentioned Cuban born terrorists that began on April 10, 2002, when the President of Panama herself, by way of Executive Orders 58, 59, 60 and 61 rejected the just and well founded request of extradition against the four terrorists, submitted by our government on January 12, 2001, strictly following procedures demanded by Panamanian law and the existing international instruments.

“The acceptance of such a request would have permitted to try them for the crimes committed for decades against our people, which have caused so much mourning and grief to Cuban families.

“It should be mentioned that among many other terrorist actions, Luis Posada Carriles is directly responsible for the bombing in 1976 of a Cubana Airlines plane in which 73 people died; for the bombing campaign against Cuban hotels in the 90s that caused the death of young Italian tourist Fabio di Celmo; and for many assassination plots against our Commander in Chief. Posada Carriles is also wanted by Venezuelan justice.

“Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, among his many crimes, murdered Cuban fishery expert Artaignan Díaz Díaz in Mexico, and also participated in the preparation of the bombings against Cuban hotels and the training of mercenaries who were recruited for such terrorist actions. Jiménez Escobedo is wanted in Mexico, after being tried for drug and explosives traffic.

“Guillermo Novo Sampoll, besides being guilty of planting explosives in Cuban embassies, airplanes and ships of other countries that trade with Cuba, for which crimes he could be wanted in many

countries, was one of the assassins of Orlando Letelier, former Foreign Minister in Allende's United Popular government, killed by a bomb in Washington by order of bloody dictator Augusto Pinochet's Chilean DINA. Novo Sampoll is directly involved in the training of terrorists that were captured in Cuban territory after sailing from the United States in 2001 with the mission of attacking civilian and tourist facilities in our country.

"Pedro Remón Rodríguez was the murderer of Cuban diplomat Félix García Rodríguez in New York on September 11, 1980, and of Cuban émigré José Eulalio Negrín He also bombed the Cuban Permanent Mission to the UN in late 1979 and a few months later attempted to assassinate the Cuban Ambassador to the UN.

"This is the condition of the international terrorists that have just been pardoned by the President of Panama, disregarding even the fact that the legal process against them was not over. The Panamanian court that tried the terrorists for the assassination attempt against our Commander in Chief in 2000 sentenced Luis Posada Carriles and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo to 8 years in prison, and Pedro Remón and Guillermo Novo Sampoll to 7 years. The sentences were appealed by the lawyers that represent workers, students and Panamanian aborigines, since they did not match the seriousness of the crime and also because the irregularities of the process.

"President Moscoso did not even wait for the ruling on the appeal by a Panamanian higher court, which in itself also constitutes a violation of Panamanian law, a flagrant disregard for the judiciary.

"Likewise, as it says on the communiqué issued on this morning by the Ministry of Government and Justice of the Republic of Panama announcing the signing of Decree 317 by President Moscoso for the pardoning of the four terrorists, the Constitution of the Republic of Panama, in its Article 179, authorizes the 'decrees for pardoning political crimes, the reduction of sentences and granting parole to those convicted of common crimes.'

"Does President Mireya Moscoso consider terrorism a 'political crime'? The crimes for which the terrorists were tried and convicted by a Panamanian court of law have nothing to do with 'political crimes.' The four terrorists now pardoned by Panama's President are nothing but common criminals, terrorists and mercenaries who in order to assassinate comrade Fidel would have also caused the deaths of hundreds of sons and daughters of the Panamanian people.

“Therefore, Cuba reiterates that the pardon granted by President Moscoso not only violates Panamanian law, but also international instruments against terrorism signed by the Republic of Panama. It constitutes an affront to the victims of terrorism and their families, and turns the President of Panama into an accomplice of terrorism and responsible for the impunity of the four murderers.

The Revolutionary Government reminds all that in its August 22 official note it announced that a pardon granted to the terrorists would automatically cause the breaking off of diplomatic relations between both countries, an alert that was reiterated in the note issued yesterday, August 25.

“Therefore, according to an agreement of the Council of State, the Revolutionary Government announces that as of this hour, 4:15 p.m. diplomatic relations have been broken indefinitely between the Republic of Cuba and the Republic of Panama, a state that has shown its inability to prevent the monstrous action that has been executed against the people of Cuba.

“The President of Panama, accomplice and protector of terrorism, will shoulder the historic responsibility of this disgusting and treacherous act, and will be equally responsible of any new crimes that these abominable murderers may commit in the future.

“The Revolutionary Government of Cuba.
“Havana, August 26, 2004.”

In late 2003 I talked to Cuban ambassador Carlos Zamora in Panama about the extradition process. Now, in Havana in 2005, I asked him for an interview. He agreed and we met at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations.

I still call him Mr. Ambassador, for I met him when he had the responsibility that he carried out with the nobility of a simple man whose only garment is modesty and his great weapon diplomacy.

“Mr. Ambassador, how do you value the period of time between the preliminary hearing and the trial?”

“From the preliminary hearing to the trial there are several events that modify the situation, The first one is that Judge Paniza makes an important decision at the preliminary hearing: he summons to trial based on the four charges presented by the Prosecutor’s Office

—conspiracy to commit a crime, the crimes of public security, and possession and illegal entry of explosives, plus in the cases of both Posada and Gaspar Jiménez, the fact of forged documents on their part. Based on Judge Paniza’s consideration of several crimes, the addition of all implied that at least, if they were found guilty of a single crime, the most evident of all, possession of explosives, they should have been convicted to 7 years in prison. And if they had been found guilty of the other crimes, as you can well assume, because there was clear evidence of their guilt, the addition of all the sentences —depending on the degrees and the judge’s considerations— would be of 15 years; that is a range of 7 to 15 years. Between the time of the preliminary hearing and the trial, there were several events that modify these circumstances. First of all there is the resignation of Paniza and the appointment of the substitute judge.

“Undoubtedly Paniza’s resignation is not voluntary. He was pressured by several people to abandon the process. As far as we could find out, there was pressure on Paniza from the Miami terrorist mafia and from the terrorists themselves; he received threats and there is clear evidence that there were also actions from his superiors trying to take him out of the process.”

“Do you mean former President Mireya Moscoso?”

“I mean that we have information that President Moscoso asked a Supreme Court Justice who was very close to her to look for a legal way to take him out of the process, or that at least the sentences were benign enough so that taking into account the time the defendants had been in jail they would not be much longer in prison after been sentenced.

“The bottom line was that Mireya Moscoso wanted a light sentence, so that if she was forced to intervene the political cost would not be high. With a six or seven year sentence, taking into account the 4 years they had been detained a pardon would be much easier. On the contrary, a much heavier sentence would make it harder to justify a presidential pardon. The thing was to obtain through the court a legal way to release them or obtain a sentence that would justify the action in the eyes of public opinion and before us and others, and would allow a pardon for only a short sentence.

“But the trial was delayed; it could not be held in 2003 and it had to be postponed for 2004. Besides Paniza’s resignation and the circumstances in which it happened, we received information that

Judge Paniza was terrorized and Judge Hoo is appointed. Who was he? He was an assistant to Joaquín Ortega, the magistrate from the Second Higher Court that oversaw the process and acted as deponent against the terrorists.

All the information indicates that Ortega was a corrupt magistrate that had been sanctioned by the Supreme Court for accusations made against him, and Magistrate Ortega had been in cahoots with Rogelio Cruz for benefitting the terrorists, a fact that caused that lawyers for the plaintiffs submitted complaints against Ortega to the Supreme Court. In view of the situation and in order to avoid a sanction from the Supreme Court, Ortega submitted his resignation in 2003.

“Hoo was Ortega’s assistant and he was part of the trickery between Ortega and Cruz to benefit the terrorists.

“Hoo’s appointment as substitute judge for the trial was cause for suspicion, but the other substitute judge could not be appointed, for she was the daughter of Rafael Rodríguez, one of the lawyers for the plaintiffs, and the trial presented her with a conflict of interests.”

According to Judge José A. Hoo Justiniani’s record he did not have enough experience for such a complicated case.

“For Judge Hoo the case, on one hand, was an opportunity for career advancement, but on the other it was a very complex and complicated case, for there was much at stake. He knew the case, for he handled it for Ortega when the Second Court had to do with it.

“With Ortega out of the picture, the deponent was someone by the name of Mendieta and the situation with the Second Court was different. Therefore, Judge Hoo had to be more careful.”

Was that the time that Colin Powell interceded on behalf of the terrorists?

“What happened besides the change of judges? Colin Powell’s visit in November for the commemoration of Panama’s centennial. The US administration had already begun to act in a more public way to demand from Panama a solution to the process more in tune with the mafia’s interests.

“Take notice that on October 30 there was a demonstration in Miami in front of the Panamanian Consulate, where those mafia characters delivered a letter demanding from President Moscoso a

solution in the case of the terrorists. There were very serious charges against Paniza in a campaign made in Miami, which continued later with letters. Several Miami religious leaders sent a letter to President Moscoso requesting benevolence for the terrorists. The letter was signed by several bishops and priests from different denominations who addressed the Panamanian president in a sort of campaign trying to pressure her from the public point of view, but that at the same time would allow the Bush administration to act with Moscoso on behalf of its protégés.

“Then there is Powell’s trip, of which there are clear versions that he asked President Moscoso on behalf of Bush to find a formula that would allow for a solution to the terrorists’ case.

“Then in February there is Otto Reich’s visit. It is general knowledge that Otto Reich has close links with the Miami mafia, with Posada and with everybody linked to the Iran-Contra case. At that time Otto Reich was the White House’s special envoy for Latin America. His visit to Panama was allegedly private, because when he was in the Army he had been stationed in Panama. He traveled with his fiancée and found the time for some official meetings and a very short official program, but most of the time he and his fiancée acted as tourists in Panama.”

But that was not his real intention.

“According to existing versions, Otto Reich went to Panama to define and specify the Panamanian government’s actions for the release of the terrorists, so his public statements and the conference he gave at a lunch with the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce were to underline the Bush administration’s anti-corruption policy that was based on the fact that any government official or politician involved in corruption would be denied a visa.

“This was a clear message for the President and her close associates in the government, who had been accused of serious crimes of corruption. They would not have the protection or the support of the United States. Unless they complied with the US request by way of Secretary of State Colin Powell regarding the protection of the terrorists, they could not rely on US assistance or with the necessary visas for traveling to the United States.

“This was a dissuasive element that the US administration counted on for achieving results in relation to Posada Carriles. This happened in February, 2004 and the trial is in March.

“The point is that after Collin Powell’s visit, President Moscoso contacted this magistrate who was very close to her, according to information that we received, so that he would take care of things.”

Was the trial a defeat for the defense?

“Undoubtedly the trial was a complete defeat from the legal point of view, public opinion and whatever for Posada Carriles. There was no doubt that they were guilty, for the evidence was overwhelming. No court on Earth could have found them innocent of the crimes, and I believe that the great skill of Judge Hoo was to find the necessary middle ground to save face on one hand by finding them guilty, and on the other find a lopsided legal interpretation that would deny Judge Paniza’s legal approach. In that manner he could give light sentences to the terrorists. Judge Hoo was able to juggle his way through with that sentence. He found them guilty, made all the allegations that undoubtedly the defendants were going to assassinate Fidel Castro, that they would bomb the place. He left no place for doubt. But what did he do? He quoted one article from the Criminal Code, and instead of finding them guilty of three separate crimes, he made an interpretation on the basis that a single crime included all the above mentioned. With that interpretation he lowered the maximum penalty to seven years, plus one more to Posada and Gaspar Jiménez for using false documents and identities, the so called crime against Public Trust. Therefore, the most they could get under Judge Hoo’s new interpretation of the law is up to 8 years for Posada and Jiménez, and 7 for Remón and Novo.

“That is Hoo’s basic contribution to pave the road for Moscoso and to grant the Americans and the mafia a solution of the problem, while he saves face sentencing the terrorists.”

President Mireya Moscoso Travels to Miami to Discuss the Judge’s Decision

Why did the Judge delay his decision?

“President Moscoso asked him not to make his decision public. She traveled to Miami and took the Judge’s finding to explain it over there, to exchange opinions, that is the reason for the delay.

“You were there, and you tried to talk to Hoo, and he said this and that and delayed the interview, and all that was because of Moscoso’s visit to Miami to explain the result to her friends.

“If I remember correctly the judge’s decision was made public in late April, the 26th or 27th.

“It is because of the pressure by the plaintiffs that forced him to make the decision public. A ridiculous sentence regarding the number of years. That is the result of the trial.”

What did the plaintiffs do?

“It forced the plaintiffs to rethink their strategy for the appeal process, which began to be delayed, and they wanted to do it fast, so that the Second Court would have the case in their hands before the change of government.

“There was no time for a decision on the appeal by the Second Superior Court during Moscoso’s term of office, because the proceedings take time.

“The plaintiffs were interested that the case reached the Second Court. But the defense had a strategy for slowing down the process and win time while the pardon was being conceived.

“Mireya Moscoso’s term as President of Panama came to an end. The Judge had been asked to prepare the proceedings for delivery to the Superior Court for the appeal process. In September the process should be in the hands of the Second Court.

“The perception not only of the lawyers for the plaintiffs, but also of many lawyers with which we talked, both friends and enemies, was that not only the guilty finding would be upheld by the Second Court, but that it would also correct the sentence by Judge Hoo, deciding to reverse to Judge Paniza’s original approach that there was a succession of crimes, and that the sentence would be harsher. That was the widespread opinion among jurists and persons related to the case.”

The change of government was about to happen?

“There was going to be a change of government. Undoubtedly, an administration such as the PRD’s, headed by President elect Martín Torrijos, would not interfere in the process. They had already declared that justice should run its course and that the courts would have the last word in the case of the terrorists. With Martín Torrijos the possibility of a pardon would not exist.

“This process of appeal at the Supreme Court would take months well into the Torrijos Administration, and it was widely believed that both the Second Court and the Supreme Court would uphold the guilty verdict and very probably would increase the sentences.

The only chance that the terrorists would have was that Mireya Moscoso, violating the Constitution and breaking the laws of Panama, gave them a presidential pardon. And we speak of violation and breaking the law because the Constitution of Panama does not contemplate a pardon for the crimes they had been convicted of, that is, the presidential pardon is granted only for crimes of a political character, and Posada Carriles and his terrorist team were not charged as such. The Constitution is very clear on the matter. And Moscoso could not exercise her right to reduce a sentence, because the legal process was not over, the decision was not final and the terrorists were at the court's disposal, not at the disposal of the executive, not at the disposal of the Ministry of Government and Justice through the Direction of Prisons. They were under the court's jurisdiction, because until the decision is final, the prisoner is not at the disposal of the executive branch.

"If the sentence had been final, that is, if the legal process had ended, then she could have reduced the sentence to benefit them. Any decision by President Moscoso would have violated the Constitution and the law, placing her outside the law and turning her into a protector of terrorists. That would be an atrocity in every sense – legal, constitutional, ethical, moral and political. If in Panama things were taken seriously, Moscoso would be on trial for a number of very grave crimes –of treason, for having acted above the Constitution and the law.

"She has been suspended by History; she has challenged ethics and moral and has come out as what she is: an immoral person. For the people and world public opinion she is out of place and a phony. If things were done as they should, she would have to stand trial.

"Unfortunately, due to Panama's characteristics, the degree of corruption that exists in that country and the degradation of its institutions and its system, this might very well remain in total impunity, the same impunity that she granted the terrorists in spite of the serious crime they intended to commit. As you know, it was not only the assassination of a head of state, but also an abominable crime where hundreds of Panamanian students would have died. And if you compare the size of Panama and its population, it would be something only equal with September 11. It is a country with 3 million people and there would have been a crime that would have meant the death of a thousand of its citizens. Compared with the Twin Towers, I would

say that for Panamanians it would have been worse. Therefore, Moscoso's atrocity can be better gauged when you compare it with the consequences of that terrible crime.

"It is the evaluation of the President's act to please Bush, shortly before the US electoral campaign, but at the same time it is the favor that she was doing to herself to guarantee protection, freedom from persecution by the Bush administration and what that administration would do to protect her and help her in the face of accusations that would hound her for her acts of corruption, and undoubtedly for that same act of releasing the terrorists. Of course, in order to grant a presidential pardon when her term was practically over—in five days she would no longer be president, for the pardon was signed on a Thursday and the new government would be inaugurated the following Tuesday or Wednesday— she needed a favorable atmosphere, and she tried to create it by promoting an anti-Cuba campaign."

Mr. Ambassador, the Cuban government always denounced each of these deceptions.

"We had information, and our government denounced what was about to happen, and it was done in the only tone it could have been done, a very vigorous and clear tone. And President Moscoso made use of the denunciation to generate an anti-Cuba campaign and began making declarations, and even made the decision of expelling me from the country, precisely to feed that campaign, with the pretext that I was disrespectful of her. Initially she achieved some confusion, because people could not think, could not believe, could not imagine that she was capable of such an act as granting a pardon to those people that had just been convicted, and whose process was not finished, and that she would commit such atrocity. That is why at the beginning people in some circles weakened and thought that our denunciations, our accusations had no base. But when they saw that she granted the pardon, everybody felt cheated and that the President had deceived them and that our accusations were true, and that what was happening was what the Cuban government had alerted, Moscoso's commitment to the US government."

What happened in Panama on the morning of August 26, when the public knew about the pardon?

"When people woke up in the morning of August 26 to the news that she had granted the pardon and that the terrorists had left the

country in the small hours, it took them by surprise, because it was so unexpected.

In many political circles there was no doubt that Moscoso had done a thing like that, but in the way she had handled the denial campaign against the Cuban government's denunciations, the declarations by Foreign Minister Harmodio Arias denying it all, people did not think that she would be capable of such an act, and that surprise turned increasingly into rejection and indignation, and it ended with students, workers, and many popular sectors out in the streets in a reaction that became violent and did not go further because the police did not attack the students and the people, but received orders to fall back, maintain control over what protesters were doing, but not to attack them. This avoided deaths and wounded

“There were large demonstrations in the capital, in Veraguas, Colón, a reaction of the more conscious popular sectors in the country. What happened was very strong and a practically unanimous condemnation on the part of news media, political and social sectors. No one backed the President's decision.

“The government acted with malice. Notice that she launched the anti-Cuba campaign, expelled me. That decision was made around the 23rd. I was called by the Foreign Minister and he told me that he wanted to meet with me on the 24th. We informed Cuba and did not hurry to call back the Foreign Minister, for we had been informed by friends of the decision. The meeting was held on the 24th. The Foreign Minister invited me very cordially to leave the country; he even used the pretext that with the new government that situation would be short lived, but that it was the position adopted by the President due to the ‘insult’ by our government. We left the country on the 25th. They deployed a surveillance team after us. Many friends who wanted to say good bye called us, so we invited them all to the embassy at four p.m. and then left for the airport. The embassy was packed, and many organizations went, even with their flags, and there was no room inside or outside. We read a declaration answering the government's accusations and arguments. Uniformed and undercover police officers were there and also at the airport. When we arrived there was an individual with a digital video camera, and when I asked him what medium he was from, he said that he was a student, but he was a police officer in civilian clothes. Some students that were at the airport began asking him for his student ID,

what university he was in, and the guy lost his nerve and ran away, with the students chasing him, until he ducked into the airport police's office.

"Obviously he was taping the people that had gone to see me off. A real provocation, in a country that evidently was trying to establish elements for keeping up the anti-Cuba campaign and accusations against people close to the popular movement. At the airport were Berríos, the lawyer, student and union leaders, Rafael, another lawyer, etc. Those were the ones at the airport and that was a way of coercing them. That day in the early morning was the operation to take the terrorists out of the country. That is, after we left.

"According to the versions I have, Moscoso signed the pardon close to midnight, after eleven o'clock, and ordered Barés to launch the operation. All was ready. At 2 a.m. two US registered airplanes landed at Tocumen. Those planes had been sent by Santiago Álvarez to fetch the terrorists.

"As you know, Cuba had requested and presented a note to Panamanian authorities asking that Santiago Álvarez be arrested for extradition purposes in case he entered Panama, due to accusations against him for his terrorist actions, which included the persons arrested here in Cuba, the three that landed on Las Villas north coast, who came to commit terrorist actions in our country, including the action against Tropicana that was ordered by Santiago Álvarez. He was in one of the planes that landed at Tocumen, together with other terrorists from Miami.

"Barés personally occupied militarily El Renacer and spirited out those people. Javier Tapia, deputy head of Immigration, was waiting for them at the airport.

"Novo's and Jiménez's relatives were aboard one of the planes. Barés deployed units at El Renacer, sent other three special forces units of the police under Commissioner Escobar to patrol the route from El Renacer to the airport, with strict orders that if popular organizations made an attempt to endanger the operation, the units should shoot to kill, and later on they would blame the Cuban security services of a provocation, of violating Panamanian law, and that it would be a pretext for accusing Cuba.

"After the release of the terrorists from jail, he took them to the airport. While Immigration prepared the documents, Barés had breakfast with them. At 6:35 a.m., Novo, Gaspar and Remón took a plane

for Miami, and Posada Carriles, Santiago Álvarez and the rest took the other one for Honduras. Meanwhile, when the people knew of this, they began to mobilize, and Berríos tried to present a writ of unconstitutionality to the Supreme Court, But in order to do it he needed the pardon decree. And the thing is it had not published. Not only the decree was not public, but legally it was not in force until published in the Official Record, which was not made public until 8:30 a.m., when the terrorists had already left Panama. And that is another illegality. That is, the operation is a completely illegal act, and in fact what was done was an officially protected prison break. Notice that a week after the pardon was granted many of the persons included in the pardon were still in prison.

“Some people did not leave jail until fifteen days or a month later, because of a simple reason, besides the pardon being illegal and unconstitutional, when a pardon is granted there are legal procedures: it has to go before a court, before a judge –in the case of the terrorists there were in charge of the judge, so the only one who could order their release was the judge.

“The judge did not order their freedom, so they ignored the law and acted with impunity and arrogance.

“Due to all this, there is an investigation that the Prosecutor’s Office finished recently and as a consequence the Minister of Government and Justice, the Chief of Police, the Head of Immigration, Commissioner of Police Escobar and head of Prisons Concepción Coro have been summoned to trial.”

And President Moscoso will go unpunished?

“The President is not included because she was granted immunity by the Central American Parliament. Remember all the criticism that she made of PARLACEN. She boasted that she would never go to PARLACEN, and in the end she went looking for protection and immunity to trial. At the very least, to put her on trial Panama would have to ask PARLACEN to end immunity.

“I believe that according to Panamanian law it is not the President who is responsible, but the Minister that accompanies her in the execution and decision of the pardon. It all goes to show that Panamanian institutions do not work; they were not capable of preventing Mireya Moscoso from committing such an act. It is on record that the Supreme Court Chief Justice was against the pardon, that even after it was signed he pointed out that it violated the Constitution.

He presented a project to the Supreme Court saying that the pardon was unconstitutional, but it is still under discussion. Justice César Pereira Burgos resigned from the Court, for the Paole Law establishes that at 75 years of age justices of the Supreme Court must retire. Undoubtedly the reason was this issue, and it saved face for Panamanian justice, which as a legal system, as in the case of the Prosecutor's Office, always displayed a clear disposition to try and convict the terrorists.

“As a state, Panama failed, but the dignity of the Panamanian people was upheld in the first place by the honest and vertical attitude by the plaintiffs and their lawyers, and the Panamanian people, that at all times demanded the punishment of the terrorists; but their institutions betrayed them, their President showed one more time what little value she placed in her people's mandate. In these circumstances, the severance of diplomatic relations that our government had warned about is not only a sample of the indignation and the protest of the Cuban people, but also a gesture of solidarity with the Panamanian people that was powerless before the violation of its Constitution and its laws and unable to prevent the ignominy that was committed at that moment. The breaking-off of relations was due to the degree of corruption and degradation that represented President Moscoso's government and it was a way to demand the reparation of this damage caused to the law, the Panamanian people and to international public opinion.”

There is no doubt that the plan against President Fidel Castro in Panama was an assassination.

“It was an assassination plan that was thwarted, and they failed thanks to Cuban security services, that knew of it ahead of time and acted to prevent it.”

Thank you, very much, Mr. Ambassador.

THE PALACE OF THE HERONS

After the preliminary hearing was over on September 3, 2003, I went together with cameraman Antonio Gómez to the Palace of the Herons, the seat of the Presidency of the Republic of Panama. I had with me a request for an interview with President Moscoso and a brief but solid set of questions on two issues: how to contribute to

the war on terrorism and the history related to the Centennial of the Republic of Panama, which would be celebrated in those days.

The President had just returned from a trip to Trinidad and Tobago and had made a declaration to the press about the struggle against terrorism. That was the beginning of my questionnaire and I even mentioned the article that reported her declarations.

Some very polite guards received us and invited us to tour the place of fictions. A truth stands out: the herons that roam freely and are easily scared at the sight of a simple pointing finger.

We went straight to the press office and were met by Mrs. Gómez, in charge of processing interview requests. I explained my intentions, she listened very attentively and we even smiled together when I asked her if it would be possible to see the President.

The presence of Cuban journalists on hallowed grounds made some doors to open and faces peek in curiously.

“Where can I reach you with an answer?” Asked Mrs. Gómez.

Obviously the questionnaire and my résumé were not enough. I should have thought of a telephone and a fax number. Suddenly I remembered some filmmaker friends who had helped very much with the editing of materials for Cuban TV. Without asking for their permission I gave their number. The answer was very important for me. I was expecting it, but the evidence would serve me. I even keep paper napkins that I write on or written messages that I am sent.

Mrs. Gómez invited us to coffee and immediately showed us out. In truth, there was not much to talk about. I had to wait.

On our way out we admired the majestic colonial white mansion. From the hill where it stands I marveled at the sight of the bay bordered by Balboa Avenue, all the way to Paitilla Point and beyond.

“What time does the President usually arrive?” I knew it was a silly question, but sometimes a silly question works.

“Well, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon”, answered the guard who had received us.”

“About any time, right? And the herons...?”

“They are always there.”

It was not the answer I expected. I wanted to know why there were herons at the palace, but it seems that the young guard noticed that the President of Panama did not spend much time in her office.

We spent about two hours with a woman journalist who claimed that she went with the President on her travels, and is proud of it.

At one of the benches outside we said good bye and thanked everyone for their attention.

Two weeks later my filmmaker friends, whom I already had told about my giving their number, called me with the news that I had a fax from the President's office. The answer was incomplete. Nothing was said about terrorism, only about the Republic's Centennial, and that the interview would be with Prime Minister Ivón Yong.

I called Mrs. Gómez to thank her for her trouble, but insisted that I was not interested in an interview with the Prime Minister but with the President. Later on I wondered whether I had been at the Presidential Palace or at the Palace of the Herons, which are always there.

Mireya Moscoso is a great fake. Her political discourse is cold and vague, and she is more concerned about the latest fashion than about her country's fate. Once in a while she is seen at some social event, bedecked in jewels, making a compliment and away from her people.

There is talk that she is building a house in Miami for the time she leaves office and that she has close links with the Miami terrorists that planned the assassination of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

They say that her sister Ruby is behind the stage with the terrorists' wives and even has very private contacts with the terrorists themselves.

A STORY THAT DOES NOT BELONG TO THEM

On the trial's day before last, prosecutor Arquímedes Sáenz announced that the terrorists had made their deposition after being arrested for five months, after their records had been studied and Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque had attended Cuban TV's Round Table on November 20, 2000.

After two attempts of interrogation on the part of Panamanian investigators, the terrorists' version crops up: they had traveled to Panama to help with the defection of a top officer of the Cuban security service. The declaration contradicted a previous one at the time of their arrest at the Coral Suite Hotel: "We came to

protest against President of Cuba Fidel Castro and to do some shopping.”

When they were asked what kind of protest and what kind of shopping they remained silent.

To remember the words of Cuban Foreign Minister Pérez Roque is to finally discover where Posada Carriles, Pedro Remón, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and their lawyer Rogelio Cruz had their drinks before trying to concoct a story that does not belong to them.

STATEMENT BY THE CUBAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

STATEMENT BY FELIPE PÉREZ ROQUE, CUBAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, AT THE INFORMATIVE ROUND TABLE HELD AT CUBAN TELEVISION STUDIOS ON NOVEMBER 20, 2000, “YEAR OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECISION OF FATHERLAND OR DEATH.”

(Verbatim version, Council of State.)

“I believe the information I am going to give is of great importance for our people.

“I must begin by saying that from June to October, 2000, our country’s General Directorate of Intelligence obtained information about the organization and preparation of an assassination plan against the Commander in Chief, and that the execution would be in the hands of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and other counterrevolutionaries based on Miami and Central America.

“This was the starting point of a long effort of information collection and analysis. The appropriate measures were taken up to the eve of the Cuban delegation’s trip to the Panama Summit.

“From the very first moment, the decision taken by Comrade Fidel was to attend the Summit, no matter what the enemy’s plans were, to denounce them openly and confront them with public opinion and international law for their monstrous crimes and repeated assassination plans against him in each and every one of the Iberian American Summits.

“The Cuban-American mafia underestimated the Panamanian people and its authorities. They believed everything would be easier there.

“So I will give some chronological information of how all this process took place.

“November 16-17

“From 1:00 to 3:00 a.m., a meeting of Comrade Fidel with the chief of the Cuban Directorate of Intelligence, General Eduardo Delgado, and with General Humberto Francis, head of Personal Security. The main issue of the meeting was whether Posada Carriles was still in Panama.

“We knew that he had arrived on November 5. Our main concern was that according to his usual practice he would organize the assassination and then leave the country. At that time on November 17 it was confirmed that he was still in Panama City.

“As part of the guidelines conceived and given by Comrade Fidel I was told to send a cable to the Cuban Ambassador in Panama telling him to summon foreign and local media to a press conference on the day of our arrival at 3:00 pm, at the hotel where the Cuban delegation would stay.

“I have a copy here of the message that we sent to Zamora, the Cuban Ambassador to Panama, and it says:

‘Zamora,

‘You must organize together with Ponce and Francis’ comrades (our people that had gone before) the following:

‘First, at the hotel where the Commander will stay prepare a room for a meeting with some 30 national and foreign news media.

‘Second, that meeting will be at 3:00 p.m. on Friday 17. There will be a statement that he will read to the press.

‘Third, you must choose and send me the list of the 30 news media, which should be chosen according to their importance and seriousness —approximately 10 Panamanian and 20 foreign media —TV, radio, news agencies and newspapers.

‘At the end we will distribute copies of the statement.

‘Answer ASAP the proposal of the 30 media that will be invited.

‘Best regards,

‘Felipe.’

"This message, by order of Comrade Fidel, was sent in the early hours to our Ambassador, and before we went home we knew that he was already working in its solution.

"The decision in the plan conceived and prepared and in the orders given by Comrade Fidel, that at the exact moment of our arrival to Panama, which was at 11:15 a.m., the head of Personal Security should contact Colonel Carlos Rodríguez, who had left for Panama four days before, on Sunday the 12th, to examine the existing information and the location of the terrorists, particularly the presence and location of Posada Carriles. That was the previous decision a few hours before our delegation left for Panama.

"November 17

"11:20 a.m. Our delegation arrives in Panama.

"President of the Republic Mireya Moscoso welcomes our delegation under heavy rain. A few words to the press, in which Comrade Fidel greets the Panamanian people and announces that he will make a public statement later. Those images were seen by our people.

"12:40 p.m. We arrive at César Park Hotel, where our delegation was going to stay, as well as most of the attending delegations.

"12:50 p.m. Ten minutes after arriving at the hotel, there is a meeting of Comrade Fidel with the chief of Personal Security and Colonel Carlos Rodríguez, who had arrived four days before, as I previously mentioned.

"Exact verification of Posada Carriles' presence, as well as of the other terrorists. Actions up to that moment. Selection of precise information that would be given to the Executive Secretary of the Council of Public Security and Defense, to the Chief of the Institutional Protection Service, and to the Chief of Panamanian Police, who were waiting for a previously requested meeting with our comrades for early afternoon.

"1:30 p.m. A few minutes after this meeting with Comrade Fidel, General Francis and Colonel Carlos Rodríguez delivered the information to the previously mentioned Panamanian officials, based on the complete confidence in the seriousness and professionalism that our comrades had been able to appreciate in their contacts during the preparation period of the visit. The document with the information was submitted to them. A request was made that they act as

soon as possible, for one hour and a half later the Cuban delegation would release to the national and foreign press the statement announced at the airport by Comrade Fidel.

“What follows are the names, personal data, locations of persons involved in the assassination plan that was delivered to these three Panamanian officials. I have here a copy of the material submitted. I believe it is very important that our people know the content of this information, which has not been made public until now.

“Luis Faustino Clemente Posada Carriles. 72 years old. He is 1.90 centimeters tall. White skinned, has green eyes and his hair is white. He has scars on his face. He speaks with difficulty. Born in Cuba. At present resides at the Coral Suite Aparthotel, on North First A Avenue, between North Second A and West 49 St., El Cangrejo, Panama City. Room 310.

“For communications he uses cell phone 620-4335.

“He moves around in a red Mitsubishi Lancer. His driver is a young Panamanian black man whose name is Pepe Hurtado, a trusted man of César Andrés Matamoros Chacón. Posada uses, among others, the following aliases: Ramón Medina, Ignacio Medina, Juan Ramón Medina, Ramón Medina Rodríguez, José Ramón Medina, Rivas López, Juan José Rivas, Juan José Rivas López and Julio César Dumas. He has a very long record as a terrorist. He was the author and mastermind of the assassination plan against the Cuban President, to be executed during the 10th Iberian American Summit.

“Pedro Remón Rodríguez. 55 years old, although he seems to be around 40. He is 1.80 centimeters tall. Remón is white skinned, has brown eyes, chestnut hair and strong build. Born in Cuba and a US citizen. At present resides at 170099 NW 98 Avenue, Hialeah Gardens, Florida, the United States. P.O. Box 52-0865, Miami, Florida. House telephone: 412-6330; at work: 825-2501; fax number: 825-9088. He is involved in terrorist plans against Cuba. He is closely linked to Luis Posada Carriles. He is involved in the assassination plan against the Cuban President, one of the main planners and possibly one of the assassins.

“Antonio Iglesias Pons, also known as **“Tony”.** 65 years old. He is 1.69 centimeters tall. Normal build. He is white skinned, has light eyes, grey hair, with pronounced baldness. Born in Cuba, a US resident and US citizen. He has close links with Luis Posada Carriles

He has been used as courier to bring the money that would be used in the assassination plan against the Cuban President. He took part in the buying of the armaments. It is possible that he will not participate in the assassination because he had a stroke a few days ago.

“Santiago Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá. 61 years old. He is 1.84 centimeters tall, has white skin, brown eyes, chestnut hair with slight baldness, Born in Cuba and a US citizen. He is a resident of 1005 Belle Meade Island Drive, Miami, Florida. Cell phone: 588-4884; office: 821-3241; house phone: 756-6115.

“He has played an important role in the planning of the assassination. He was supposed to participate in the actual assassination.

”César Andrés Matamoros Chacón. 63 years old. He is 1.74 centimeters tall. White skinned, heavy set. Grey hair and brown eyes. He has a mustache and wears eyeglasses. Born in Cuba, he is a resident of Corner of West 140 and unnamed alley on the second floor of a two storey building in Panama City. He is owner of a boat building business named Acuaris Flexifoam, S.A., located at Domingo Díaz Avenue (Tumbamuerto), on the corner with West 140 St., no number, facing Empresa Cochez and Co., Pedregal Borough. Office telefax: 266-8797; telephone: 220-0324. Cell phone: 620-5559. He is building a motel at Gorgona Beach and has a kiosk where fried fish and fried green plantains are sold. He is renting a house at that said beach.

“To reach the motel you take the Pan American Highway to Costa Rica. Take a road with a sign indicating a turn to Gorgona till it reaches a sign that says Gorgona Hyatt. Take a right until the end of the road.

“Matamoros is the owner of a metallic green '92 Nissan Sentra, dark windows: also a white '88 Jeep Cherokee and an '80 brown Ford pickup truck.

“He has close links with Luis Posada Carriles and is one of his main supports in Panama for the assassination plan. He gave Posada a car and a driver.

“Roberto Carrillo. Approximately 60 years old. He is 1.75 centimeters tall. Heavy set, White skinned, brown eyes and grey hair. Born in Cuba and a Panamanian citizen.

“He is a resident of No. 7 Mitre de Saint Malo, Altos del Doral Development, Panama City. Home telephone: 230-3180; cell telephone: 618-4490 y 621-4771. He drives a white 4x4 Ford Explorer,

license plates 138505. Carrillo works at Empresa Casamar, located at Lewis St. between Diablo, Gaillard Avenue and Puerto St., Balboa. His wife is named Iris and works at Decofierros factory, located at La Pulida Avenue, between East 91 St. and East 93 St., Altos del Río Development, Río Abajo District.

“Telephones: 221-7959 and 221-8044. She drives a white pickup truck.

“He is linked to Luis Posada Carriles and is one of his main supports in Panama for the assassination plan. On occasions he has kept arms and explosives at his home for Posada Carriles.

“**Carlos Vicente López Sánchez**, also known as **Chente**. A Honduran, 30 to 35 years old. He is thin and has a defect in his right eye. Wears small eyeglasses. He is a resident of Barrios Cavanna, 1337, SW 14 St, San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Telephone: 554-1500. Cell phone: 981-4976.

He is linked to Luis Posada Carriles and is used by him in missions related to the plan.

“**José Hurtado**, also known as **Pepe Hurtado**. A young Panamanian black man. He drives the red Mitsubishi Lancer used by Luis Posada Carriles in his moves in Panama. He is a trusted man of César Andrés Matamoros Chacón, who has close links to Posada Carriles and is one of his supports in this country.

That is the information that officers of Cuban security gave Panamanian security shortly after the meeting they had with Comrade Fidel.

“It must be said that during all the time previous to the arrival of the delegation, the Cuban party had discussed all fundamental questions related to the delegation’s security with the persons appointed by the government of Panama.

In declarations some top government officials complained that Comrade Fidel had not told President Moscoso at the airport about the assassination plan. Something absurd, unnecessary and impossible. The President had been welcoming delegations since the previous afternoon up to the small hours, with no rest at all, until that day at 4:00 p.m.

“Our security people, as did the rest of the delegations, talked about such matters with the completely trustworthy officials appointed by her. It would have been ridiculous to speak with her on the matter at the airport.

“Shortly after 3:00 p.m., 10 minutes after the set time —there was a delay due to some trouble with the audio equipment at the hotel room where we had summoned the press—, the statement was made public and the press conference was held by Comrade Fidel, which ended at 3:50 p.m.

“4:00 p.m. Once the press conference ended and the denunciation had been made to the national and foreign press, we left immediately with Comrade Fidel to the Church of St. Paul Apostle, where General Omar Torrijos remains are buried.

“4:15 p.m. Fifteen minutes after leaving the hotel we arrived at the church, where a large number of people had gathered spontaneously. Those images were seen too.

“4:30 p.m. After the homage to General Torrijos, an intimate homage of Comrade Fidel at the crypt where his remains are in all modesty, the Commander in Chief talked to the persons that had gathered at the church’s atrium, and there also was a crowd outside that could not get in. This happened at 4:30 p.m., and the Commander is talking with that enthusiastic and solidarity audience that had filled the church when they knew that Fidel was there.

“4:35 p.m. When Comrade Fidel had been talking for five minutes, the chief of Personal Security, General Francis, is told that Posada Carriles has been arrested. He asks for confirmation of the news. After a few minutes the news is confirmed: Posada Carriles has been arrested. He relays the message to me that I’m standing next to Comrade Fidel.

“4:43 p.m. While he is talking to the people in the church, I tell the Commander that a note has been received. I thought that I had to relay the information to him right away, but he was speaking, so I waited until he is interrupted by applause, and in the folder with the schedule of activities, that I had in my pocket, which was the only paper I had, I took out my pen and on the back cover wrote this note that I have here: ‘They got Posada,’ and put it before him during the applause. He was silent at the moment, pauses, interrupts his speech and tells the people there that he had received very good news’ –I have it written down here –‘that I would like to share with you, but I would not like to turn from the subject that I was talking about and when you know you’ll understand its importance.’

“I believe that our people understand what we were feeling at that moment, those who learned of the news, and we were thinking

of the relatives of our comrades murdered in the Barbados plane, of so many Cuban families in mourning by the terrorist action, and of the father of young di Celmo.¹ Our mind was flying at the moment, knowing that the self-confessed mastermind of those horrendous crimes had been arrested.

“So efficient had been Panamanian security that between 2:15 p.m., when the meeting with them had ended, and 4:30 p.m., that is, in two hours and 15 minutes, they had captured the main actors of the assassination plan.

“Eight days before, the Cuban side had delivered in Panama City to Ramiro Jarvis, the liaison officer of Panamanian security with the Cuban Intelligence Service, a list of 55 terrorists who resided in the United States and Central America, who were potential participants in the assassination plan that Posada Carriles would put into practice following orders from the Cuban American National Foundation. On that list delivered by our comrades were the names of Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, who were captured, as we have explained, together with Posada Carriles. This is a copy of the material delivered on November 9 to Panamanian authorities, with the names and data of 55 terrorists who reside in the United States and Central America and who were potential participants. On that list are Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo and Guillermo Novo Sampoll. They are on the list previously delivered to the Panamanian security liaison officer by our comrades of Cuban Security.

“On the evening of that 17th —day of the Summit— and on the morning of November 18 the Cuban born accomplices were arrested. I read their data here: César Andrés Matamoros Chacón and Roberto Carrillo, residents in Panamá; and Panamanian José Hurtado, who was Posada Carriles driver in that country, is also arrested.

“On November 18 we were hard at work in the Summit. Our people have seen on television the program of activities of the delegation and its part in the debates.

“In the evening we went to the University, where the students were waiting for us, and they welcomed Fidel outside and inside

⁸ In 1997, a bomb planted at the Copacabana Hotel in Havana by a Salvadoran mercenary recruited, trained and paid by Luis Posada Carriles killed young Italian tourist Fabio di Celmo.

the Auditorium, something our people were able to see on television. While we were there the Commander in Chief ordered us to contact the Panamanian Chancellor to deliver to him that same night of November 18 our diplomatic note in relation with the extradition to Cuba of the Cuban born terrorists captured in Panama, so that they could stand trial in our country, and in that Note we set out the legal reasons and demanded that under no circumstance they were to be released. They could not be released, because of all the appropriate procedures, and given the seriousness of the crimes committed against our country that have caused numerous victims.

“Here I have a copy of the letter that approximately at 11:00 p.m. of November 18, while the act at the University’s Auditorium was in progress, I delivered to the Panamanian Vice Minister of Foreign Relations, who was in charge of the Chancellery, for the Minister was not available. We delivered the note dated on November 18: ‘The Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Cuba sincerely greets...’ Here we explained and demanded, and with this action the official extradition proceeding began so that the terrorists could be tried by a Cuban court. That Note is presented the night before our return to Cuba

“I must add two other elements:

“The first one: this morning I spoke by telephone with Panama’s Foreign Minister, Mr. José Miguel Alemán, to whom I reiterated the contents of the diplomatic Note delivered on Saturday evening, and to whom I reiterated our request for keeping those terrorists in prison as the first step of the extradition process to Cuba that we have requested, and that we will deliver additional information within the stipulated period. That is one issue.

“The second issue: At this moment a diplomatic Note of the Cuban Chancellery is being delivered, another Note to the Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Panama, that our embassy in Panama is delivering, in which we request to communicate to the Panamanian government, in relation to the Note that we delivered on November 18, the following:

“What is the issue? In the Note that we delivered on Saturday evening, there are the names of Luis Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Remón Rodríguez and also the name of Manuel Díaz, which was the name that at the time we had as the alleged

name of one of the terrorists. But in this second Note we say the following:

“It has been found that the person that appears in the afore mentioned Note under the name of Manuel Díaz is actually the infamous Cuban born terrorist Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo —as comrade Taladrid explained here—, with the following criminal record:

“On July, 1975 he was involved in an assassination attempt against the Cuban Ambassador in Argentina at the time, Emilio Aragonés, and in an assassination plot against Cuban President Fidel Castro on the occasion of the Cuban President’s first visit to Jamaica.

On July 23, 1976, he participated in an attempt to kidnap the Cuban Consul in Merida, Mexico. In the attempt an official of the National Institute of Fishery, Artaignan Díaz Díaz, was killed —the comrades from the Institute of Fishery surely remember this. On that occasion he was arrested by Mexican authorities, and later he escaped from jail. On that matter ample information was given here today.

“He led the escape attempt of terrorist Orestes Ruiz from a Mexican jail. That terrorist was also involved in Artaignan Díaz’s murder.

“In 1977 he was arrested by US authorities for violating the Neutrality Act when he took part in terrorist actions against Cuba. Subsequently he was released.

“In 1985 he took part in the preparations of violent actions that he planned when infamous terrorist Orlando Bosch Ávila was jailed in Venezuela. Bosch masterminded together with Posada Carriles the bombing in midflight of a Cubana Airlines plane in 1976 in Barbados, and as our people knows, that terrorist lives free in the United States, in Miami, and he is guilty with Posada Carriles of the murder of 73 passengers and crew of our plane in Barbados.

“In 1991, on the occasion of the First Iberian American Summit in Mexico, he planned an attack on the plane that Cuban President Fidel Castro would use. He was going to fire a surface to air missile, but the plan never went into action.

“In 1992 he traveled to Central America to obtain RPG-7 rocket launchers through Posada Carriles for a similar plan during the 2nd Iberian American Summit held in Spain.

“In late 1993 he was part of another plot to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro at the time he was attending the inauguration of President of Honduras Roberto Reina.

“In 1994, at the 4th Iberian American Summit held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, he was able to introduce with Posada Carriles a .50 caliber Barret rifle at the place where the Summit was in session, but they could not execute the action because of the existing security measures. As it is known, some of the people involved later said that when they were aiming they could not see Fidel’s head very well, that they were confused, that they saw other heads, they could see the head of García Márquez, and they could not see very well and decided to abort the assassination plan.

“In 1997 and 1998 he was involved in assassination plans promoted by the Cuban American National Foundation against the life of the President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers Fidel Castro, on the occasion of his visits to Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. Those actions were also planned by Posada Carriles.

“This person Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo has also been indicted by the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Republic of Cuba in Arraignment No. 1/2000 for the crime of Terrorism and Assassination Attempt denounced by the President of the Cuban delegation to the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government, and he is one of the main links of this group with the Cuban American National Foundation.

“In view of the fact, the Government of the Republic of Cuba expects that the Government of the Republic of Panama take the appropriate measures so that Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo, as well as Luis Faustino Clemente Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Remón Rodríguez, and others involved in the criminal acts denounced on November 17 by the Head of State and Government of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruz, are unable to evade the action of justice.

“The documentation of evidence of the criminal acts committed by the persons above mentioned will be presented within the period of time established by the authorities of the Republic of Panama.

“The Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Cuba takes advantage of the occasion to reiterate to the Honorable Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic of Panama the testimony of his highest consideration.

“Signed on November 20, 2000. And diplomatic Note that is being delivered.

“Finally I want to express to our people, and especially to comrade Giustino di Celmo, who is here with us, to the relatives of our murdered comrades in the Barbados airplane, to the orphans, widows, parents who lost their children in the flower of life; to the relatives of Cuban diplomat Félix García, murdered in the United Nations in the 70s by a commando of which one of those arrested was part; to the relatives of comrade Artagnan Díaz, murdered in Mexico and to so many relatives, neighbors, comrades of our comrades that were treacherously murdered, not face to face and in the battlefield, but through treacherous plans with the use of explosives, with treacherous attacks, to all of them, on behalf of our Government, I want to express the certainty that the Government of Cuba, with the support of our people and of international public opinion, will demand justice, will do all that is necessary to prevent that these terrorists, that at last have been arrested, escape again.

“Cuban diplomacy, our country’s judiciary, the direction of the Revolution headed by Comrade Fidel, all know very well the suffering of many Cuban families that have all the right to see justice done for the murder of their loved ones.

“I believe that after receiving this ample information, the Panamanian people, its authorities, its heads of security that acted with such diligence and professionalism will understand the expectation and interest with which our people are following this situation.

“Families claim justice. The international community can see that all evidence exists to try those murderers of innocent civilians.

“We cannot give back to comrade Justino his son’s life; we cannot return their murdered relatives to our comrades. We can give them solidarity, we can make it clear once again that all of us, all of our people are from now on his family. In each of us comrade Justino has a son. But what we can guarantee is that there will be no humanly possible way of preventing us from demanding until the necessary justice is done in this case.”

(End of Statement by the Minister of Foreign Relations Felipe Pérez Roque.)

After studying this declaration, the terrorists made up the version that they had gone to Panama to aid in the defection of a top Cuban Security officer, a thesis they could not uphold nor demonstrate. Let

us analyze each and every one of their statements and see how laughable and evasive they are.

MAY 16, 2001. DEPOSITION BY LUIS POSADA CARRILES

“I was in Panama to provide assistance to a high Cuban government official, General Eduardo Delgado, Chief of Cuban Intelligence Division (DGI), who was going to defect.” He expressed his dissatisfaction with the figure of Cuba’s ruler, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, in the Cuban government, which he described as a disastrous regime. He declared that he had fought the subversion against democratic regimes in different fronts — “I mean the Castroite subversion.” He claimed having worked with the Venezuelan and Salvadoran governments. He said he was the target of assassination attempts in Venezuela and Guatemala. He said that he did not want to be accused of Illicit Association or of Possession of Explosives for Attempting against Collective Security, and immediately said: “I want to finish the interrogation for the day and I ask for another opportunity to continue later.”

Investigators asked him who had introduced the explosives in the Republic of Panama, if he had planned it, if he had introduced them in the national territory, if he handled the explosives, if he armed them. Posada did not answer; he only said that he felt hot and that he preferred to end his deposition, for which reason the proceeding was ended,

MAY 21, 2001. DEPOSITION BY GASPAR JIMÉNEZ ESCOBEDO

He said that he would only answer to the charges of Possession of Explosives and Forged Documents, and immediately claimed he was not guilty when he said “nothing was found on me and nothing happened to anybody. I was detained at the Coral Suite Hotel approximately at three thirty or four o’clock in the afternoon, I can’t remember exactly, and nothing at all was found on me.” He expressed that after clearing Customs at Paso Canoas he went to the house of his

friend José Valladares, aka Pepe el Cubano, because he wanted to see him, stay there a while, because in the San José-Panama flight he felt sick, had to take his medicine, and he stayed there until 4 p.m., until he felt better and that is why he did not make the trip by plane, because it's a small one, and it could cause him a brain clot, so he decided to drive to Panama City with Hurtado as driver on November 16, 2000.

"I came to Panama because the chief of tyrant Fidel Castro's bodyguards was going to defect and needed help."

Asked about the actions he would take in Panama for the above mentioned purpose he answered: "that the man give himself up; the General would defect and we would take him with us."

To the question of how he had made contact with the above mentioned General he answered: "No, no, I don't like those people."

Gaspar Jiménez said that Luis Posada Carriles, and Pedro Remón with Posada, had the contact with the alleged defector.

He was asked what his role was in the plan of the alleged defection of General Eduardo Delgado and he said: "As far as I know, no one had a specific thing to do. When the man said where he was we had to pick him up."

He expressed that he had entered El Salvador once or twice, and Panama on two occasions when he used the Manuel Díaz false identity. Investigators asked him why he used a false identity on the first occasion, and he answered: "To see if the identity was any good, and the second time to pick up the defector, and knowing that Fidel had sent a list to Panama of 55 people so that they could not enter."

Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo pointed out that he could not say the place, date and where he got the forged passport in the name of Manuel Díaz, or who gave it to him. He also said that he did not know anybody by that name and that he has had that identity since 1994.

Jiménez Escobedo claimed that he traveled from Costa Rica to Panama together with Pedro Crispín Remón. Asked if he visited supermarkets, drugstores, and shops or bought anything in Costa Rica he answered: "NO."

He said that when he arrived to the border post at Paso Canoas in Costa Rica, on November 16, he did it with the forged passport and that Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena), Guillermo Novo and José Manuel Hurtado were waiting for him, and they drove in the red car to Pepe El Cubano's farm.

About the document found at the Coral Suite —“Cuban Comandos Action and Justice Military Group”—, he said that he had never seen it before.

MAY 24, 2001. DEPOSITION BY GUILLERMO NOVO SAMPOLL

“In my opinion, the Prosecutor reached the conclusion —God knows answering to what interests— that I came to Panama to kill Fidel Castro, and all I have read in the files is that they try to go from Point A to Point Z, the latter Point Z being the guilt; that is, she is trying to see how to justify the charges, and is not looking for true facts.”

Novo Sampoll challenged the arraignment and the process, because according to him there was no evidence, and he asked to end the interrogation.

The investigators decided that Novo was in a stable condition to continue the interrogation. During the questioning, the presence of a forensic doctor was requested for examining the terrorist and decide on his health condition, but he refused to be examined. Questioning was resumed seeing that the interrogation had not been long enough to tire out the accused.

Guillermo Novo Sampoll said that “[...] the person that was going to defect was named Eduardo Delgado.” When he was asked how and where he obtained the information about the alleged defection he answered: “[...] I am asking Madam Prosecutor for the suspension because of anxiety. I totally disagree with you that you force me to accept Article 25 or that you continue questioning me.” For that reason, the forensic doctor was asked again to examine the accused to determine the alleged state of anxiety and once again he refused to be examined.

Interrogation continued with the question if he had made any direct or indirect contact with the alleged defector and he answered: “I am not in Havana, at any G-2 office.”²

² Because the Cuban revolutionary Intelligence Service began as a branch of the Rebel Army before the creation of the Ministry of the Interior, originally it adopted the military denomination of G-2. Although officially it is no longer in use, many people still call it by that abbreviation.

Asked where he had learned about the alleged defection, he said: “I will not answer and I do not want to continue with my deposition at this moment.”

End of interrogation.

MAY 29, 2001. DEPOSITION BY PEDRO CRISPÍN REMÓN

He declared in general about things that he does not know for fact, but that he learned from Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena) and the rest of the terrorists.

He declared that during the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government, “the Castro communist regime set up a trap in Panama planting the military explosives in the red car used by Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena) in Panamá”. “But thank God the military explosive was planted in the red car, which the driver had been ordered to return.”

Remón expressed that “the trap lasted about five months, from June to November, 2000, a period in which the ‘kijoteros’³ introduced to Panamanian territory military explosives, and also a Miami Marlins aqua green and black bag with a large advertising of Miami’s *El Nuevo Herald* that would serve to incriminate Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena).”

Remón pointed out that he was “informed by Posada Carriles that in late June, 2000 he was contacted by a certain ‘Emilio’ through a cellular phone with international coverage that had been given for communication inside Cuba.”

He said that this Emilio, who had previously contacted Posada Carriles, introduced himself and said that he came on behalf of ‘Ramiro’; that he had come to El Salvador from Cuba. Emilio had been given the mission to tell Posada a very important message: “I have also been ordered to inform you that on November 17 the 10th Iberian American Presidential Summit will be inaugurated in Panama, which he will attend, and the Head of Security General Eduardo

³ The term refers to Cuban Intelligence agents, whom Remón claimed had planted the explosives in their car.

Delgado will also attend together with Fidel Castro, besides the high officials that are the advance party, and he is planning to take advantage of the Summit to abandon the island or leave the country.”

According to Remón, Posada told him that Emilio had told him that Delgado would take that step only if Posada Carriles would pick him up and guarantee his later transfer to Miami or the United States of America. Posada promised the defector that he would get him asylum, said Remón, and claimed that this event took place between June 20 and 25, and that he, Pedro Crispín, traveled to El Salvador on August 26 of that year at the bequest of Luis Posada Carriles, where he told him the details, and that according to Emilio, the defection would take place on November 16-17.

The Prosecutor asked Remón if he was present at any meeting between Posada Carriles and the said Emilio, and he answered: “No, Madam Prosecutor”. Then she asked if he had met him some other time, and he repeated the previous answer.

Remón said to the Prosecutor that “[...] he insisted that Posada did not travel alone to Panama and that he should travel a few weeks before to reconnoiter, rent apartments in different areas of the city, and to prepare and plan the escape routes [...]”. He told Posada “that what he was going to do was not easy, because it would happen in the middle of the Summit and security measures would be extreme and the Cuban ruler always sends ahead a list of Cubans in ‘exile’ whom they consider potential threats, which hampers free movement in Panamanian territory and airport exits and arrivals.

“That in view of the security measures for the Summit, the decision was made to enter Panama through Paso Canoas, a border place that communicates that country with Costa Rica by land, and that Posada wanted to visit a friend at Chiriquí province.”

Remón claimed that Gaspar Jiménez (aka Manuel Díaz) and Guillermo Novo did not know about the details of the defection, and that he was the one that asked them for help. Subsequently he said that since Gaspar and Novo Sampoll had US passports they would be in charge of moving the alleged defector.

Remón commented that “Posada told him that one of the signals for the defection was that General Eduardo Delgado would be in a press photograph in front of the Cuban President, instead of being

in the background.” He showed him the May 14, 2000 edition of the Panamanian newspaper *Crítica Libre*, where he claimed there was a photo of said General and explained that the clipping that he produced does not have the defection signal, but that it was in a photo published on a previous date.”

According to Pedro Crispín Remón, “Posada told him that the first call from Emilio ruled out the possibility of defecting at Tocumen International Airport in Panama, and that instead it would happen at the César Park Hotel, where the Cuban President was staying, or the next day during an act held at the University of Panama.”

The Prosecutor asked Remón why he claimed that the explosives were planted in the red car and he answered: “I tell you again, Madam Prosecutor, that I stand by my version of the events.”

Remón claimed that among the persons that gave information or knew of the defection plan were Lázaro Betancourt, Santiago Álvarez, Rafael del Pino and Florentino Aspillaga.

And about the document drafted by him, according to forensic examination, “Cuban Commandos Action and Justice Military Group”, “it represented through initials a homage to Cuban exiles Arnaldo Monzón and Julio Gracia, and he wrote it in Atlanta, Georgia, while he waited for his hurried Atlanta-Miami, Miami-San José flight on November 15. He expressed that he was not able to finish what he thought would finish later and that he did not even show it to the rest of the group, and that his intention was to publish the document if the defection succeeded.”

Prosecutor Argentina Barrera asked Remón what was the plan named David vs. Goliath to achieve the prompt restitution of freedom in Cuba, and he answered: “[...] the answer is that I would prefer to continue with the presentation of our true reason for our presence in Panama during the 10th Summit.”

Remón says that he “[...] traveled to Costa Rica to meet Gaspar Jiménez, who was waiting for him at the Best Western Hotel. The next day they boarded a SANSÁ flight from Juan Santamaría Airport in Costa Rica to Coto 47 Airport, located near the Panamanian border. When they arrived he went into the brush, took out a Global Positioning System that he had hidden on his person, and read the geographic position of the airport, in case that a private airplane had to look for the alleged defector.”

Versions about the defection of Cuban General Eduardo Delgado could well deserve, as a friend says, a Raspberry Prize awarded to the worst stories.

When Pedro Remón was interrogated by Prosecutor Argentina Barrera, he spent about an hour with evasive answers trying to prevent her from finding the truth.

According to Posada Carriles, the details of the alleged defection were not known by Novo Sampoll and Gaspar Jiménez, yet both of them attempted to show full knowledge of an scenario that did not succeed even after five months of rehearsals.

Prosecutor Arquímides Sáenz told narco-lawyer Rogelio Cruz that his clients' arguments had no evidential value. Over and over the prosecutor would say: "How is it that Eduardo Delgado, who obviously is an intelligent man, is going to choose explosive experts to assist him in an illegal exit?"

He also insisted repeatedly that the terrorists only spoke about the hate for Fidel Castro and not about the love for the Cuban general. The truth they tried to hide so much was betrayed by José Manuel Hurtado, the driver, who declared that all of them were curious about where Cuban President Fidel Castro was going to stay and the schedule that he had for the 10th Summit.

Several rhetorical questions would serve to understand the real objective of well known international terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll and Pedro Crispín Remón in their three day sojourn in Panama.

Why was Posada the only one who said he knew the full story of the defection?

Why the version about the planting of the explosives in the red car was exclusively Remón's?

Why Gaspar Jiménez spoke about his role in the plan if, according to Posada Carriles, he ignored it?

Why Novo Sampoll refused to be questioned by the prosecutor?

The depositions did not match up. General Eduardo Delgado's photo never appeared in a newspaper, as Remón assured to the Prosecutor.

And to top it all, I include in this chapter the interview with General Eduardo Delgado with the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Cuba.

DEPOSITION BY GENERAL EDUARDO DELGADO

At the seat of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Cuba, 552 Amistad Street, between Monte and Estrella, Centro Habana Municipality, City of Havana, Cuba, at 9:00 a.m. of July 1, 2002, "Year of the Heroic Prisoners of the Empire", before prosecutor **Francisco Javier Fernández Guerra** and the examining instructor, **Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Hernández Caballero** appears citizen **Eduardo Delgado Rodríguez**, born in the City of Havana, white skinned, son of **Francisco and Carmen**, date of birth December 9, 1946, married, with a university Degree of Law, who holds the post of Chief of the General Directorate of Intelligence of Cuba, with the rank of Brigade General, officially seated at the Ministry of Interior's central building, located at Revolution Square, City of Havana, who has been warned of his obligation to tell the truth about the events under investigation, according to Article 170 of the Law of Criminal Proceedings of the Republic of Cuba, and Article 923 of the Judicial Code of the Republic of Panama, the following is expressed:

Question Number One: Do you accept your participation in the events narrated in the document shown to you? Please, elaborate. (The deponent is shown the statement by Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations His Excellency **Felipe Pérez Roque** at the "Informative Round Table" held at Cuban Television studios on November 20, 2000.)

Answer Number One: Yes, I was in Panama from September 11 to 15, 2000 meeting with the Head of Institutional Protection Service, **Alejandro Garz**, and with the head of the National Security Council, **Pablo Quintero Luna**. On November 16 and 17, 2000 I met with the Cuban President. **General Humberto Francis**, Chief of the Directorate of Personal Security was also present. This meetings were held in our country for the analysis of information related to the assassination plot that was planned by terrorists at present detained in Panama.

Question Number Two: Please tell if as the previous described document says Cuban Intelligence kept on November 2000 a list of

persons that could commit terrorist acts at the time of **Doctor Fidel Castro Ruz's** presence in Panama. Please, elaborate.

Answer Number Two: Yes, we had a list with the names of the most notorious terrorists that had a recent history of assassination plots against Cuban President **Fidel Castro Ruz**. On this list were the names of the terrorists that later on were arrested, and it was delivered by my order to Panamanian authorities several days prior to the inauguration of the 10th Iberian American Summit.

Question Number Three: What are the standards that Cuban Intelligence uses for the drafting of the above mentioned list?

Answer Number Three: We make the list based on the record of terrorist elements, mainly Cuban born, who have been involved in violent actions against our country, against Cuban representations and officials abroad, and very specially against our President.

We also take into account the criminal records of terrorists of other nationalities who have carried out similar actions elsewhere and against other leaders.

Question Number Four: Is telephone number 620-4335, mentioned in His Excellency **Felipe Pérez Roque's** public statement, a cell phone number with international range that belongs to Cuba or has been used in Cuba?

Answer Number Four: Cell phone number 620-4335 does not belong to Cuba, therefore I do not know if it has international range.

Question Number Five: What is your opinion about **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez's** claim that between June and November, 2000, **Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena)** used a cell phone with international range that had been given to him for communication in Cuba?

Answer Number Five: I have nothing to say. I do not know what the accused **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** claimed.

Question Number Six: What do you have to say in relation to operations carried out by **Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena)**, **Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo (aka Manuel Díaz)**, **Guillermo Novo** and **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** for planning, organizing and carrying out actions for the introduction of military issued explosives in Panama?

Answer Number Six: On June 2000 we learned that **Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo**, after a meeting with **Luis Posada**

Carriles in El Salvador, informed his bosses at the Cuban American National Foundation that Posada had over 100 lbs of a highly powerful explosive that friends were keeping for him in Central American countries, and that he also had possibilities of getting grenade launchers, grenades, rifles and other appropriate means for carrying out an assassination attempt against the Cuban President. Subsequently, in late July, 2000, **Terrorist Antonio “Tony” Iglesias Pons**, a resident of Miami, also visited Posada Carriles in El Salvador. **Iglesias** gave him on that occasion \$5,000 dollars that the Cuban American National Foundation had sent him and accompanied him to Honduras to buy arms and explosives, particularly in San Pedro Sula, where they met with terrorists **Rafael Hernández Nodarse** and his son **Joaquín Hernández Banegas**. They coordinated and bought other weapons and explosives that would be used in the assassination plan against the Cuban President in Panama. On that opportunity, **Luis Posada Carriles** and **Antonio Iglesias Pons** bought over one hundred pounds of US made C-4 plastic explosive, several rocket launchers and other means. **Posada Carriles** decided to sell the 100 lbs of explosives he already had and previously informed **Jiménez Escobedo**, in order to increase his winnings. The arms and explosives were introduced in Panama City through the Costa Rican border. The possession and use of explosives and high powered weapons for carrying out terrorist actions has been common practice of all the above mentioned, and that can be verified in the legal assistance of the Panamanian Prosecutor General’s Office to the First Prosecution Office of the First Judicial Circuit in relation to the crime of possession of explosives on the part of the above mentioned terrorists, in which **César Andrés Matamoros** tells **José Manuel Hurtado** the advisability of getting rid of the impounded handbag that contained the explosives so as not to have a problem. **César Andrés Matamoros** also declared about the handbag found with explosives and the appropriate mechanisms to build a bomb, which was in the red Mitsubishi Lancer of which **José Manuel Hurtado Vivero** had informed him. On the other hand, in the conclusive report by the Forensic Chemistry Section of the Technical Judicial Police’s Department of Criminology, in which there are details about the analyzed towels that were found at the hotel room where two of the terrorists were staying. The report mentions the existence of ex-

plosives in said belongings. Finally, in the report of the analysis it is ratified that in the handbag there were over 30 lbs of military issued plastic explosives such as C-4, RDX and pentrite.

Question Number Seven: Explain if the Modus Operandi of Messrs. **Luis Posada Carriles (aka Franco Rodríguez Mena), Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo (aka Manuel Díaz), Guillermo Novo Sampoll** and **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez**, according to Intelligence information, is the same as in other illicit actions investigated by the Cuban government, and in which the above mentioned have been involved.

Answer Number Seven: Indeed, the Modus Operandi of these terrorists matches the one in other violent actions investigated by our security services and in which these individuals have been involved. To elaborate on the above, I must point out that in the preparation and execution of their plans they have used false identities and forged documents, and they have carried out fraudulent operations for the transportation of the participants, of arms and explosives, through land borders, ports and airports. Many times these means have been illegally acquired with money from the Cuban American National Foundation. Additionally, they have bought the support of unscrupulous persons residing on the country where their plans are to be executed. Terrorist **Luis Posada Carriles** has been investigated for his participation in several deeds, such as: in 1964, near Tampa, state of Florida, in the United States, he ran a camp of the so called Revolutionary Board (JURE), where Cuban born terrorists were trained. At this place he was trained by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on explosives and demolition. On the other hand, his participation as joint mastermind in the bombing of the Cubana Airlines plane in Barbados in 1976, which cost the lives of 73 persons, was proven, for which he was indicted and jailed in Venezuela until mid 1985, when he escaped with the assistance of the **Cuban American National Foundation**. In the 1990s he had frequent contacts with terrorist **Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo**, also known as “**Gasparito**”, at present detained in Panama, as well as with other terrorists, with whom he organized several assassination attempts against the President of Cuba, on which I will elaborate further on. Additionally he assisted the terrorist organization Cuban American National Foundation, located in Miami, the United States, in the acquisition of weapons in Central

America for carrying out violent actions against Cuba. In relation to some assassination plots against the President of Cuba, I can point out that in late 1993 and early 1994 he participated in the organization of a plan that he would execute in Honduras, on the occasion of the inauguration of President **Carlos Roberto Reina**. In June of that very same year he organized another assassination attempt at the 4th Iberian American Summit held in Colombia, to where he traveled together with **Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo**. Both plots were funded by the Cuban American National Foundation.

According to **Ramón Custodio**, leader of the Honduran Committee for Human Rights, in 1995 **Posada Carriles**, in complicity with some Honduran members of the military, planted 41 bombs in that country. In 1997 he organized the terrorist structure created by the Cuban American National Foundation in Central America for bombing Cuban tourist facilities. For that purpose he recruited Salvadoran mercenaries **Raúl Ernesto Cruz León**, **Otto René Rodríguez Llerena** and **Francisco Antonio Chávez Abarca**, which he confessed to **The New York Times** in July, 1998. **Cruz León** and **Rodríguez Llerena** were captured, tried and convicted for these acts and are in prison in Cuba. In all, that group armed 11 bombs, of which 8 exploded. The bombs caused one death, several wounded and serious damage, besides the terror and the threat to the security of the Cuban nation. In that same year of 1997 **Posada Carriles**, together with deceased Cuban American National Foundation executive **Arnaldo Monzón Plasencia**, participated in the preparation of an assassination attempt against the President of Cuba that they planned to carry out during the 7th Iberian American Summit in Margarita Island, Venezuela. In 1998, **Posada Carriles** participated in another assassination plan against the Cuban President that they would have carried out at the Meeting of the Association of Caribbean States held in the Dominican Republic in August 20-25, 1998. The plan was to assassinate the Cuban President planting high explosives on the highway where the Cuban delegation would travel, or tossing grenades at the meeting place; as part of the above mentioned plan, **Posada Carriles** met in Guatemala City with terrorists from Miami, among others **Ramón Francisco Font Saumell**, **Enrique Bassas Almeida** and **Luis Orlando Rodríguez Martínez**. They discussed how to smuggle arms and explosives to Santo Domingo. **Posada Carriles** described the plan

as the best opportunity up to the moment, because local security probably would be vulnerable and arms and explosives could be easily smuggled in from Haiti.

On that same year of 1998, **Posada Carriles** planned to bomb a Cubana Airlines plane that made the route from Havana to Central America. In 1999 and 2000 he prepared other terrorist plans against targets in Cuba and interests of our country abroad. For that purpose he bought explosives and other military supplies.

In reference to **Gaspar Eugenio Jiménez Escobedo**, I must point out that as a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent recruited in 1961, he was trained in explosives. This terrorist has also participated in several violent actions, such as: in July 1975 he was involved in an assassination plot against then Cuban Ambassador in Argentina **Emilio Aragonés**, together with the already deceased terrorist **Aldo Vera Serafín**. On that same year he was also involved in a plot to assassinate the Cuban President on occasion of his visit to Jamaica. In July, 1976 he participated in an action to kidnap the Cuban Consul in Merida, Mexico. As a consequence of that action Cuban official **Artaignan Díaz Díaz** from the Cuban Institute of Fisheries was killed. **Jiménez** was arrested by Mexican authorities, but almost a year later he escaped from a Mexican prison together with Colombian drug dealer **Carlos Estrada Ortiz**. **Jiménez** led the escape attempt from a Mexican jail of terrorist **Orestes Ruiz**, who was also involved in the death of **Artaignan Díaz Díaz**. As a result of his terrorist actions against Cuba, in 1977 he was arrested by US authorities for violating the US Neutrality Act, but was released. In 1991, at the time of the First Iberian American Summit held in Guadalajara, Mexico, he planned an attack on the plane in which the Cuban President would travel there. For this action he would have used a surface to air missile. In 1992 he traveled to Central America to get through **Luis Posada Carriles** an RPG-7 (Rocket Propelled Grenade launcher) to carry out a similar plan at the 2nd Iberian American Summit to be held in Spain. In late 1993 and early 1994 he participated in the planning of another assassination attempt against the Cuban President, in case President Castro attended the inauguration of Honduran President **Carlos Roberto Reina**. In this plan he also participated under **Luis Posada Carriles'** orders. Due to the absence of President Castro, the plan was postponed for Colombia in 1994, at the 4th Iberian American

Summit. Both **Jiménez Escobedo** and **Posada Carriles** traveled to Cartagena and were able to smuggle in a .50 caliber Barret rifle. Due to strict security measures by Colombian authorities they did not achieve their purpose. In 1997 and 1998 he was involved in assassination plans promoted also by the Cuban American National Foundation against the Cuban President at the time of his visits to Vene-zuela and Dominican Republic. Those actions were also led by **Luis Posada Carriles**. **Jiménez** was one of the main liaisons of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) with **Luis Clemente Faustino Posada Carriles** in the planning of the assassination attempt at the 10th Iberian American Summit at the Republic of Panama. For that purpose he traveled to Central America to meet with the notorious terrorist for the purpose of funding the operation.

In regard to **Guillermo Novo Sampoll**, I can say that in 1968 he participated in the terrorist campaign against Cuba in other countries launched by the terrorist group named “Cuban Power”, which he led. He was part of several plans and actions organized by the U.S.-based terrorist organization Cuban Nationalist Movement. Among them are the bombings to Cuba’s commercial offices in Canada and Mexico, the bombing of Cuban merchant ships and the planning of the bombing for the assassination of former Chilean Foreign Minister **Orlando Letelier** on September 1976, a crime for which he was wanted by US authorities. Subsequently he was arrested and later released. In 1975, members of the above mentioned group tried to recruit persons to set fire to the office of MARAZUL travel agency in New York. On August 9, 1976, he participated, together with CIA agent **Michael Townley** in the kidnapping, torturing and murder of Cuban diplomats **Jesús Cejas Arias** and **Crescencio Galañena Hernández** in Argentina. In early 1997, Novo Sampoll was involved in a plan to assassinate the Cuban President by shooting down the plane in which he would travel to New York for the Earth Summit. On that same year he was involved in an operation funded by the Cuban American National Foundation for buying several drones that would be aimed loaded with explosives on targets in Cuba. In July, 1998, together with Cuban born **Manuel Camargo Saavedra**, **Armando López Estrada**, **Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo** and **Ramón Orozco Crespo**, **Guillermo Novo** planned actions for the assassination of the Cuban President during his visit to Panama for the 10th Ibe-

rian American Summit. About **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** we also have much information that link him to terrorist actions carried out by U.S.-based organizations of which he was a member, such as Omega 7, Abdala and the Organization for the Liberation of Cuba. For his participation in many terrorist actions, he was jailed for several years in the United States. 1979 was a prolific year for **Remón Rodríguez's** terrorist actions, outstanding among them the murders of Cuban émigrés **Carlos Muñiz Varela** and **Eulalio José Negrín**, in Puerto Rico and New Jersey, USA, respectively. Both émigrés belonged to solidarity organizations with Cuba. In late 1979, **Remón Rodríguez** planted a bomb at the Cuban Mission to the United Nations and took part in a bombing against the Soviet UN Mission. On March 25, 1980, he planted a bomb in the car of Cuban Ambassador to the UN **Raúl Roa Kourí**. In that action he was assisted by Cuban born terrorists **Eduardo Arocena** and **Eduardo Losada**. **Remón Rodríguez** was the trigger man in the assassination of Cuban UN diplomat **Félix García Rodríguez** on September 11, 1980 in New York. According to public reports, on October 2, 1981 **Remón Rodríguez** was arrested by US authorities with other Cuban born individuals, charged of the failed attempt to assassinate Ambassador **Roa Kourí** and for transporting explosive substances between the states of New Jersey and New York. In 1982 he was identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) as the perpetrator of several threatening calls to Cuban émigré **Eulalio José Negrín** before his murder.

Question Number Eight: What intelligence information can you supply us with in reference to the case investigated in Panama in relation to Messrs. **Antonio Iglesias Pons**, **Santiago Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá** and **Carlos Vicente López Sánchez** (aka **Chente**), mentioned in His Excellency **Felipe Pérez Roque's** statement?

Answer Number Eight: Intelligence in our hands about the above mentioned is the following: **Antonio Iglesias Pons**, aka **Tony**, as I said before, is a terrorist element living in the United States. He had ample participation in the organization of the assassination plan against the Cuban President in Panama. I also spoke about his meeting with **Posada Carriles** in El Salvador, and how he traveled with **Posada** to Honduras to buy explosives and other means to be used in the assassination, about the support in that country by terrorist **Rafael Hernández Nodarse** and his son **Joaquín**

Hernández Banegas. Iglesias Pons was part of the group of people among whom Posada Carriles chose the actual perpetrators of the assassination of the Cuban President in Panama. I can also add that on July 28, 2000 Iglesias Pons traveled to El Salvador on American Airlines flight 925 from Miami. He used his real name. On the next day he went with **Posada Carriles** from El Salvador to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on TACA Airlines flight 154. He returned to San Salvador with **Posada Carriles** on August 2. That same day Iglesias Pons flew back to Miami on American Airlines flight 926. On the other hand, Iglesias Pons was one of the would-be perpetrators of the Cuban President's assassination. As additional data I will say that this terrorist element took part in the pirate attack on Boca de Samá, in the former Cuban province of Oriente, on October 12, 1971. The attack caused two deaths and 4 wounded, all civilians, among them several children.

Santiago Alfredo Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá: This individual played a prominent role in the planning of the Cuban President's assassination in Panama and he would have played a direct role in it. On the other hand, the logistic and financial support he gave to **Posada Carriles** and the other three Cuban American arrested terrorists was also important. We also have information on Western Union check 882-905-4129 for \$950.00 dollars issued by **Santiago Alfredo Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá** and sent to terrorist **Joaquín Hernández Banegas**, a resident of Honduras, who is closely linked to **Posada Carriles** and played a prominent role in the acquisition of C-4 explosive and weapons such as M-79 rifles, Uzi submachine guns and some other means that would have been used in the above mentioned assassination. As an addendum to **Santiago Álvarez's** terrorist record, he participated in the preparation of an armed infiltration in Cárdenas Municipality, province of Matanzas, Cuba, in late December, 1991. Three elements that had sailed from US territory were captured. Their plan was to launch terrorist attacks against social, sports, educational and production facilities. He also prepared, financed, armed and ordered an infiltration north of Villa Clara province, on April 26, 2001. The infiltrators were captured.

Carlos Vicente López Sánchez: this Honduran citizen was one of the participants in the transportation of the weapons that would have been used in the assassination of the Cuban President

by **Posada Carriles** and the other three arrested terrorists during the 10th Iberian American Summit. It has been published that Honduran authorities had investigated several crimes perpetrated by **López**. He is also one of the bodyguards of the above mentioned terrorist **Rafael Hernández Nodarse** and is accredited to San Pedro Sula's TV Channel 6, owned by **Hernández**. I should stress that **Rafael Hernández Nodarse** and his son **Joaquín Hernández Banegas** have given logistics support to **Posada Carriles** in Honduras.

Question Number Nine: What intelligence can you supply about the identity and migratory displacements of **Raúl Rodríguez Hamouzouva**, a citizen that rented in Panama the red Mitsubishi Lancer, license plates 223251, used by **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**?

Answer Number Nine: According to our investigations, in the archives of our country's Direction of Immigration there is a record of a Cuban citizen by that name that left Cuba in 1998 for El Salvador. That person has no police record. I do not know the identity of that person.

Question Number Ten: What is your comment about the statement by defendant **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** that the military issued explosives found in Panama were planted by Cuban authorities in the automobile used by **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, without forcing it, taking advantage of their distraction on November 17, 2000, between 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., when it was parked on the street in front of the Coral Suite Hotel, or when it was in the open at the home of the driver, **José Manuel Hurtado Vivero**?

Answer Number Ten: I believe it is a blatant lie aimed at discrediting one of the Panamanian prosecutor's main charges. This charade by terrorist **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** is part of the strategy of the defense that tried to trick everyone into believing that I would defect and abandon President **Fidel Castro Ruz**'s security detachment at the Iberian American Summit, and that the intention of the defendants was to assist me. I believe that all the actions of the defense have been for the support of that strategy. At the same time they have carried out legal and other type of maneuvers for discrediting the charge of possession of explosives. In that sense, I have known that the defense lawyers are attempting to technically

prove the innocence of their clients. Their objective is to prove that alleged Cuban Security agents planted the explosives in the car and that they had no link to the plot to assassinate the Cuban President. To that it must be added the support given to **José Manuel Hurtado Vivero's** family. With that alleged solidarity they are trying to obtain their complicity as main witnesses in relation to the property of the explosives. All that money they are using has been provided by the Cuban American National Foundation, which have assigned thousands of dollars to obtain the release of the defendants, whether legally or with an escape plan in which they have been working since the beginning. If that version is true, why have they denied submitting to DNA testing requested by the prosecutor?

Question Number Eleven: Please tell us if you appear in the photograph been showed to you, and if you know where and when it was taken.

Answer Number Eleven: The condition of the photograph does not allow me to determine if I am in the photograph. I do not know when it was taken.

Question Number Twelve: What is your comment on the statements by defendants **Luis Posada Carriles, aka Franco Rodríguez Mena; Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, aka Manuel Díaz; and Pedro Remón Rodríguez** that they were in the Republic of Panama waiting for the defection of **General Eduardo Delgado**, which would take place between November 16 and 18, 2000, during the sessions of the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government?

Answer Number Twelve: Those statements are a ploy for trying to justify their presence in that country and cover up their true purpose, which was no other than the assassination of the Cuban President. I should also add that in the security plan I was not scheduled to be on that date in Panama City.

Question Number Thirteen: What is your comment to the claim by **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** that one of the signals for the defection would be that **General Eduardo Delgado** would appear in a press photo in front of the Cuban President instead of in the background, and that the clipping that he showed does not have in the photograph the signal for the defection, but that it was in another photo published on a previous date?

Answer Number Thirteen: The claim is inconsistent and is part of the above mentioned ploy for trying to justify their presence in Panama.

Question Number Fourteen: What is your comment on the claim by defendant **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** that **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, talked in late June, 2000 with someone called “**Emilio**”, infiltrated in Cuba, handled by someone called “**Ramiro**”, and that proof of such **Emilio**’s dependability for communicating with **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, was that the former would say “I want” and **Emilio** would answer “without country, but without master”?

Answer Number Fourteen: This terrorist’s claim is part of the legend for justifying their presence in Panama. I ignore who are the above mentioned “**Emilio**” and “**Ramiro**.”

Question Number Fifteen: What is your comment to the claim by defendant **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** that the said “**Emilio**” was the one who told **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, that a defection was under way and that during the 10th Iberian American Summit of Heads of State and Government **General Eduardo Delgado** would take the opportunity to leave Cuba?

Answer Number Fifteen: I believe that the above mentioned “**Emilio**” mentioned by them exists only in the defendants’ imagination and is part of the cover to fool others into believing that I would defect and that they were there for the sole purpose of assisting me.

Question Number Sixteen: What is your comment to the claim of defendant **Pedro Crispín Remón Rodríguez** that according to what the above mentioned “**Emilio**” said to **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, **General Eduardo Delgado** would only defect if **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, would lead the operation and guaranteed his transfer from Panama to Miami or the United States of America?

Answer Number Sixteen: I repeat what I have already said. With this claim he tries to distort the real motive for **Posada Carriles**’ presence in Panama, which was the attempt to assassinate Cuban President **Fidel Castro Ruz**.

Question Number Seventeen: What is your comment to **Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo**, aka **Manuel Díaz**’s claim that

General Eduardo Delgado had communicated with **Luis Posada Carriles**, aka **Franco Rodríguez Mena**, to carry out the alleged plan of defection?

Answer Number Seventeen: The claim by **Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo** is more of the same and is totally false. Since he cannot prove what he says, with his charges he is trying at least to achieve the benefit of a doubt.

Question Number Eighteen: Would you like to add anything in relation to the present process?

Answer Number Eighteen: The claims by these terrorists in regard to me are a ploy for trying to cover their true purpose, which were none other than attempting to assassinate the Cuban President. They are the ones who must produce evidence of this absurd fiction. The claims are laughable and totally inconsistent.

Francisco J. Fernández Guerra
Prosecutor
Lieut. Col. Roberto Hernández Caballero
Examining Instructor

Brig. Gen. Eduardo Delgado Rodríguez
Chief of the General Directorate of Intelligence

The evasion of justice has always been the leitmotif in the lives of these terrorists. Money and the Panamanian government's weakness that acted out of political differences, converted the legal proceedings in an endless act that attempted to leave out the truth.

The “Miamification” of the United States

Washington, D.C based Cuban-American lawyer José Pertierra arrived in Venezuela. He had written several articles for newspapers and Internet sites that I researched for the book, but I preferred an exclusive interview on the subject.

One morning in June I learned of Pertierra’s visit to Caracas. As a journalist that believes in achievements, I have the virtue of perseverance. To it I owe in part the meeting with Venezuela’s legal representative for Posada Carriles’ extradition process.

The venue for the meeting was an improvised setting in a small hotel room in downtown Caracas.

What is Posada Carriles’ legal situation in the United States?

“Posada Carriles is being held by the Department of Home Security in El Paso, Texas. He will appear on June 13 before an immigration judge to determine if he is released on bail. On that day he will also have to answer to the charges against him, and the only charge is strictly of migratory nature, and it has to do with entering the country without documents. That means that he is detained as if he were a common agricultural worker that goes to the United States to pick artichokes in California, not for terrorism.”

What will happen from the legal point of view on the 13th?

“On that day, the immigration judge will go through the file and will tell Posada’s lawyers that he is liable to the charges of deportation, and the charges are: that he is not a US citizen, that he is Cuban and Venezuelan, that he entered the country without a visa, or that he was

a permanent resident in 1962, but that he lost his residence by staying abroad over a year without a reentry permit, and that therefore he does not have a permit for remaining in the United States.

“The expected answer from the lawyer is: ‘We admit he is not a US citizen and that he is Cuban and Venezuelan, but he still is a permanent resident.’ We know it because Eduardo Soto, Posada’s lawyer, said that would be his defense. But that is a weak defense, because Posada has spent many years away from the United States, and that shows his intention of having abandoned the residence.

“The lawyer says that his client was not able to return to the United States because he was in jail in Venezuela, but before being imprisoned in Venezuela he spent a bunch of years torturing people in Venezuela as head of Special Operations in the Venezuelan Direction of Intelligence and Prevention (DISIP), and those years when he was torturing prisoners were the years in which he abandoned his permanent residence. The judge will make a ruling on that, but I doubt that it will be made on the 13th. I think there will be another hearing.

“But what will be heard on that day will be the arguments of why he should be released on bail, and if the only charge against him is that this gentleman is a simple undocumented migrant. The judge is empowered to release him or not.

It won’t be easy to release him, because this is an individual that already has spoken about his intentions to leave the country, and also because he has a criminal and terrorist record, about which Homeland Security has not charged him, but the record is there and the judge may consider it in a bail request.

“The concern is that he could be released.”

Taking in consideration what you just said, could Posada Carriles remain in the United States?

He might be released on bail, but staying in the United States is a different thing. To stay he would have to prove that he still is a permanent resident, something that I dismiss, because I don’t believe he can prove it, or that he deserves asylum or suspension of deportation or protection under the Agreement against Torture.”

Can an international terrorist such as Posada Carriles obtain asylum in the United States under the Agreement against Torture?

A terrorist is not eligible for asylum or for suspension of deportation. A terrorist such as Posada Carriles with a record not only as a terrorist, but as a criminal —forget about terrorism for a minute—,

just by looking at the charges against him: having bombed an airplane with 74 people—one of the athletes was pregnant—; the bombings in Havana that killed an Italian tourist; the assassination attempt of a head of state in an university that would also have killed hundreds of students. A person with that record is not eligible for asylum, the law is clear on the matter, and he is also ineligible for suspension of deportation, although perhaps he would qualify for protection under the Agreement against Torture, because that agreement protects both the criminal and the innocent, as long as they can show that there is reason to fear he would be tortured in the country to which he would be deported. But in this case there is no evidence that prisoners are tortured either in Venezuela or in Cuba. The existing evidence is that Posada Carriles is a torturer, and Article 8 of the Agreement against Torture disqualifies torturers for receiving protection under this agreement. There is quite enough evidence that he tortured people when he was head of Special Operations at DISIP. There is the testimony of a Venezuelan, by the name of Marrero, who says that Posada Carriles directed his torture. There are also testimonies of people who worked at DISIP with Posada Carriles who identified him as having personally and actively participated in the torture of prisoners.”

How does US law define a terrorist?

“That is a very good question, because at present US law says that a terrorist is a person that the Department of Home Security says is a terrorist. That is why they have been able to detain so many prisoners without evidence of being terrorists, and the irony of this case is that there is a lot of evidence that this gentleman is a terrorist, that he is the Osama bin Laden of Latin America. The United States, instead of declaring him a terrorist, says that he is a simple undocumented person that comes to pick artichokes to California, and that is sad and ironic. And that is also a very important distinction from the legal point of view, because for the simple fact of declaring Posada as a terrorist he would be disqualified for seeking bail to the immigration judge on June 13. If he is declared a terrorist he remains in jail. The judge has no power to listen to a bail request. And he has not been declared as such.”

According to US law he is a terrorist?

According to US law and to the law of any civilized country he is a terrorist. A person who bombs a plane with passengers is a terrorist by definition.

Mr. Pertierra, according to an official statement by the US State Department, the request for preventive arrest has been rejected. They say it does not meet the relevant requirements of the extradition treaty between the United States and Venezuela, meaning that the State Department considers the request is not enough to detain him. Must that request be worded in the same manner as the request of extradition?

“By definition the request for preventive arrest is something submitted as swiftly as possible to avoid the escape of the individual in order to have time to submit ample evidence in support of the extradition request. By definition the evidence you must submit is not so much. The law says that you must establish that there is probable cause that the individual is wanted in the requesting country, and that the requesting country is preparing the documentation to request extradition.

“The documentation submitted by Venezuela was strong enough for the United States to have arrested Posada under the extradition agreement between Venezuela and the United States, which was signed in 1922. The United States made a political decision in this case when it rejected the arrest.

I am not surprised, because from the beginning the United States has been biased in this case. Shortly after arresting Posada Carriles, Homeland Security said it would not extradite or deport Posada Carriles to Cuba or Venezuela. They mentioned Venezuela, and that is something that the Department should not even have the authority in this, because the decision to extradite belongs to the State Department, belongs to the Secretary of State, and not to Homeland Security. From the technical legal point of view they have no jurisdiction on this matter, but they took matters in their own hands, which proves that they have pre-judged the case, so I am not surprised that they have denied the request for preventive arrest. I am positive that the government of Venezuela is going to answer any concern expressed by the US government in its diplomatic note and we will see if after all their concerns are dismantled they maintain the same position.”

Posada Carriles was not alone when he entered the US, which means there were people who assisted him, funded the sea route, and hid him -for example, terrorist Santiago

Álvarez. Can those persons be considered liable of a crime of human contraband or any other crime in the US?

“Anyone who aided this terrorist to enter the US illegally has perpetrated serious felonies. It is a serious crime not only to assist an undocumented person to make an illegal entry, but if this person is a terrorist the penalty is harsher.

“Imagine that someone called Mohammed would assist Osama bin Laden to come to the US illegally. What would happen to Mohammed? If I were one of the persons who aided Posada enter the US I would be very concerned, because there are press reports that mention the names of some individuals that had to do with it. If Homeland Security takes its responsibilities at heart, then I think that they should investigate, and if they don’t, then the question is: why does the US government allow certain individuals to help certain terrorists to come and go as they please in the United States?

“A terrorist that aids another terrorist to enter this country in present times —if he weren’t a Cuban— would be in jail, and possibly would stay in jail over thirty years.

“There are rules for Cubans that live in the US and rules for the rest of the population. What we are witnessing in the Posada Carriles case, which is a national case, is the “Miamiification” of the United States, and that is deeply troubling, because if the US is a country of laws, and it claims it is the world leader in the war on terrorism, but at the same time harbors terrorists and those who aid terrorists, then instead of having the United States of America we have the United States of Miami.”

According to Posada Carriles’ criminal record, can he be regarded, according to US law, as a threat to the national security of the United States?

“Of course. This person is an expert in planting explosives; he has killed not only one person, but over seventy, at least the ones we know he has killed. A person with that background is by definition a threat to the world, even for Americans. A person such as that has no right under US migratory laws, but there are precedents of an immigration service granting haven to terrorists, as in the case of Orlando Bosch. The Justice Department ordered Bosch’s arrest and denied him asylum. But later on President Bush Sr. pardoned him and eventually granted him permanent resident in the US, and this terrorist had a parade in Miami. And I believe that is the precedent

that Posada's friends would like the US to follow, so that they can give him protection under the Agreement against Torture, parole, and eventually, as in the case of all terrorists, a parade in Miami."

Is there an age limit in the US for sanctioning a terrorist?

"There is no age limit for sanctioning a terrorist in the US. Indeed, if you examine US laws and the way they have been enforced, the US have denaturalized and deported Nazis that were 80 something and older for having lied of the fact that they were Nazis and for having taken part in torturing and murdering in Nazi concentration camps during the 2nd. World War. The problem is that Posada is the Americans' Nazi and it is a different situation. Posada Carriles is 77 years old, and they treated him very well when he was arrested, and although he was not mistreated at all I think that the gentleman is very healthy. Remember how they arrested him? As if they were taking a frail old man to church. They led him by the hand, poor little thing; put him in a golf cart. Wouldn't undocumented Mexicans arrested at the border wish they were treated ever so gently and with so much respect as that terrorist was treated on the day he was arrested?"

What international treaties are violating the US by not extraditing Posada Carriles to Venezuela?

"The most important of all is the existing Extradition Treaty between both countries, signed in 1922, which binds the United States to extradite a person wanted in Venezuela when the crime for which he is wanted has a corresponding part in the United States, in this case is aggravated murder.

"Second, there is an aviation treaty signed in Montreal that requires extradition of persons that have participated in the bombing of an airplane and similar acts. You will see that if they do not keep those treaties there will be demands and denunciations and challenges to the United States in venues such as the OAS (Organization of American States) and the UN. This is a sinister precedent for the world, a country that proclaims to be the bulwark of the war against terrorism harbors a terrorist, and keeps on claiming to be the champion of human rights, freedom and democracy. It seems to me hypocritical."

Extradition is a political decision on a legal basis. In the case of Posada Carriles' extradition, that decision must

be made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Her declarations on Venezuela have been aggressive, up to the point of saying that “Venezuela poses a threat to the region.”

Taking into account all the political and legal twists and turns of the case, what can public opinion expect of that decision?

“Public opinion should demand justice in this case. Cuba has suffered many deaths, and I believe that for the simple fact that the dead have been Cuban US public opinion cannot dismiss it. Cubans have as much right to live as any US citizen.

“Cubans have the same right to board an airplane, read a newspaper and expect to land at the next airport without fear that a terrorist is going to blow them out of the sky, and the American people must understand that.

“The American people must understand that an Italian tourist has the same right to be in a Havana hotel or restaurant, as if he or she were in New York, without fearing that a sinister terrorist would kill him or her, and I believe that the American people have to understand this. World public opinion is very important, but in the United States, domestic public opinion is taken more in account.

“Elián’s case showed us the power of US public opinion.¹ In this case the US government is at a dead end. They do now want to deport Posada to Cuba or Venezuela —they have said so—, but what are they going to do with him? They cannot extradite him to El Salvador, for example, where he is accused of having used a false passport, because before US public opinion, how can they justify the extradition of an individual to a country where he is wanted just for using a false passport and not to the country where he is wanted for murdering dozens of people? They can’t argue that point seri-

¹ In November, 1999, six year old Elián González was taken by his mother, without his father’s consent, in a small boat with 12 other people in a dangerous journey to the US. The boat capsized and the mother and ten more died. Elián and two other survivors were picked up by fishermen. In spite of his father’s claim from Cuba, the INS released the boy in the custody of his paternal great uncle, a Miami resident, who decided that the boy should stay in the US. After strong denunciations by the Cuban government, a long battle in the courts that reached the US Supreme Court, aided by US public opinion, was finally decided in favor of Elián’s return to Cuba on June 28, 2000.

ously to the public: release him, send him out to the street in Miami and give him a parade, as they did with Bosch. Frankly, after 9-11 I don't think that is an option. After 9-11 they'll have to answer to the American people and say why this Latin American Osama bin Laden can have a parade in Miami and walk free while they spend millions of dollars in a 'war on terror' in the Middle East and lose thousands of American lives. That is not consistent. I believe there is a lot of pressure on the part of Americans, and this case has grown in importance after the declassification of FBI and CIA documents. It has been on many US newspapers and more will come out. When the US public demands justice here, the US government, even though it does not want to, will have to do what is right, and that is to extradite him to Venezuela."

Posada Carriles is a self-confessed terrorist, yet he is being protected by the US government. The Cuban Five who are in US prisons were accused of terrorists and they are not terrorists. How can US justice be so inconsistent?

To understand it we must see the case of the Cuban Five not in legal terms, but as facts. The Cuban Five had to go to the United States and infiltrate Cuban American terrorist groups in Miami because the real terrorists were and are being protected by the US government, instead of being investigated, arrested and tried. Posada Carriles was the mastermind of a terror campaign against the Cuban tourist sector. It is precisely because of those actions by Posada—placing bombs in Havana under the protection and with the knowledge of the US government—that Cuba felt the need to send their people, for the US was not doing their job: investigating and putting an end to that terrorist campaign. Instead of giving medals to the Cuban Five—because they really are heroes in the war against terrorism—the US answer was to arrest them, and the medals and the parades in Miami are for the Cuban American terrorists. Posada Carriles is the perfect example, because he is not only the man who organized the terrorist campaign against Cuba, but also the CIA man for Iran-Contra in Central American, a CIA agent for decades, the CIA man inside DISIP in Venezuela during the Carlos Andrés Pérez administration. He is a man that not only the US government does not want to take to court, but a true creature of the US government. What the US government must do is stop that kind of action, stop being involved in terrorism. When we say that Posada Carriles is a

terrorist we have to talk about his masters. This is not a crazy man placing bombs all by himself. We have a system here, and it must be denounced.

“The Cuban Five were tried in Miami. What more can be said? Miami turns everything upside down —courts, lawyers, all the evidence in a case—, and heroes become terrorists and terrorists become heroes, and that is precisely what has happened also in the case of the Cuban Five and of Posada Carriles.”

From what I have heard of your opinions during the interview and from what I have read and seen, I believe it is difficult to practice law and look for justice in the United States. Is this true?

“Yes, it is very difficult, because there is no right. When what rules a country is not due process according to the law and the respect for the Constitution, but what exists is the arbitrary power of an administration that wants to impose a system of ideas to the world, then it is very difficult to practice law.”

Chronicle of an “Agreement Foretold”

AGREEMENT ONE: HIDE HIM

“Get in and hide, and we’ll see what happens”, seems to have been the advice the White House gave Posada when the protected prison break on that August 26, 2004.

It is reasonable to believe this, since Judge Hoo’s decision was discussed by President Moscoso in the US before the incompetent judge made it public.

The subsequent presidential pardon was in a similar agenda in which opinions about the CIA created terrorist’s fate could not be left out. The visits to Panama by the envoys of the not so “White” House ordering the President to free the terrorists is additional evidence that someone had to plan the protection of the former CIA agent.

And this is not the first time that the terrorist and others like him walk under an umbrella designed for their protection. Remember the FBI interview to Posada in Honduras during the investigation about his role in Iran-Contra, even with the pending Barbados bombing. He got off with a “good-bye” and the FBI never arrested him.

What the US government and its Miami fans do not recognize is Cuba’s loyalty to the war on terrorism, that word that according to dictionaries is synonymous with sabotage, kidnapping, alarm, violence and lack of oil.

When on April 11, 2005 Cuban President Fidel Castro denounced Posada Carriles’ presence in Miami, complete silence dominated the scene, as when hidden truth is discovered.

AGREEMENT TWO: THE GOVERNMENT'S MESSAGE

Days went by in order to gain time in the now public staging, and it was imperative to act with the mask used by the US government when it wants to hide its leading role.

This time Posada Carriles, after spending two months in Miami with an illegal status and total impunity, requested an asylum undoubtedly earned by him “for services rendered to the Central Intelligence Agency.”

In a warehouse in northwest Miami he gave a clandestine press conference in which he said that “[...] he was willing to reconsider his request of political asylum if it caused any problem to the United States government [...]”. Eduardo Soto, the terrorist’s lawyer, confirmed that “[...] his client would leave the country due to pressures on the United States and on Cuban exiles”. Soto said that “Posada, 77, had an appointment with Miami officials to discuss his asylum, but decided to call off the appointment and postpone the petition”.

The press conference organized by Santiago Álvarez and other terrorists had the purpose of having Posada distort declarations he had previously given to US news media on more than one occasion in which he confessed his participation in criminal acts against Cuba.

The Miami Herald published an interview with Posada Carriles in a luxurious building, a few blocks away from the Miami offices of the Department of Home Security, where he says “he lives quietly.”

Internet sites reported that according to the interview, “Home Security officers said that they were not actively searching for Posada because there is not a warrant for his arrest in the United States,” disregarding Venezuela’s request for a preventive arrest.

In that manner, the US government’s petition to protect his golf player at any prize was carried out. Their terrorist could not appear on the original stage.

AGREEMENT THREE: THE GOLF PLAYER

On the afternoon of May 17, 2005, Posada Carriles (for the White House, the golf player) was driven in a golf cart to a helicopter that

would take him to a suite in El Paso, Texas, where he would continue to enlarge his painting collection.

On that same day, millions of Cubans marched once again past the US Interest Section in Havana demanding Posada's and Orlando Bosch's arrests for their masterminding of the bombing of a Cuban commercial airliner in Barbados. Posada was also the brains behind the bombings of Havana hotels in 1997 and 1998 and the leader of the assassination plot in Panama against the Commander in Chief on November, 2000, among other terrorist acts.

"This is not a demonstration against the American people, as we have said before and say again today; it is a demonstration against terrorism, in favor of life and peace of our people and the fraternal people of the United States, in whose ethical values we trust," Fidel said before the march.

"Terrorism is the most modern and dramatic concept; with the support of sophisticated technical means and high powered explosives, was created and developed by the very rulers of the United States to destroy our Revolution," Fidel stressed.

AGREEMENT FOUR: POSTPONING THE HEARING

On June 13, 2005, a US immigration judge decided that terrorist Posada Carriles should remain in jail while he considered his case and the request by government lawyers to deport him from the United States.

The hearing in which immigration Judge William Lee Abbott accepts bail for the terrorist was postponed for June 24. The White House's golf player would remain in his suite. Abbott set the date for the hearing on August 24. Once again, decisions were postponed.

Defense lawyers requested bail for their client, the granting of political asylum and the transfer of the process to Florida. Abbott did not decide on the matter.

According to EFE news agency, government attorney Gina Garret-Jackson rejected the idea of moving the process to Miami. The DIS attorney argued that "in Miami the trial would not be secure and witnesses for the defense could go to Texas. She

also claimed that Posada has acquaintances in Miami's detention centers."

On the request by the defense that Posada Carriles be granted political asylum, the judge said that "he is considering, among other aspects, the defendant's abandonment of residence, because he was a legal US resident in the 1960s and decided to leave this country."

The DIS Immigration Office pointed out that "Posada no longer has legal residence that was granted on October 10, 1962."

On the subject, government attorney Gina Garrett-Jackson claimed that "after his entry to the United States, instead of presenting himself to immigration authorities for requesting political asylum, what Posada did was grant press conferences."

While the terrorist was taken to a hearing as the White House's golf player that on this occasion made an illegal entry into the US, in more than fifteen US cities demonstrations demanding his extradition to Venezuela took place.

Summoned by A.N.S.W.E.R.,¹ hundreds of people demonstrated in several cities in the US and Canada.

AGREEMENT FIVE: DISCRETION

"He must remain detained as a precautionary measure for the 1976 charges of terrorism", was Judge Abbott's decision on July 25, 2005. The immigration judge at El Paso denied the request of bail in favor of international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles.

According to news media, the hearing took 90 minutes.

The finding also mentions "the latent danger of escaping."

After this result, the Venezuelan Ambassador in Washington insisted that a "Federal court discuss the extradition request, because there is probable cause of terrorism and cannot be treated as an immigration case."

¹ Act Now to Stop War and End Racism — also known as International A.N.S.W.E.R. and the ANSWER Coalition — is a United States-based organization formed to protest the policies of the Bush administration in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

AGREEMENT SIX: ACCUSING PRESIDENT CHÁVEZ'S GOVERNMENT

On August 29, 2005, the immigration trial against the White House's golf player began at the Detention Center in El Paso, Texas.

Posada relinquished his claim of political asylum and opted for the International Agreement of Protection against Torture, the next step in choosing impossible possibilities. The international terrorist is also Commissioner Basilio, the torturer at Venezuelan DISIP. Marrero can still feel the stick jammed in his ear by Posada's orders, or Basilio, as he is known. Can the Agreement give protection to a torturer?

Edmundo Hernández remembers how Posada murdered his father at La Victoria, state of Aragua. He was seven years old and was branded for life.

Brenda, a Venezuelan revolutionary, still has the scars of abuses inflicted by Commissioner Basilio; he caused her to miscarry when he kicked her in the belly. The list of his Venezuelan crimes would be endless.

Judge William L. Abbott and the government lawyers accepted the withdrawal of the asylum request.

Matthew J. Archambeault, one of Posada's lawyers, told the judge that "his client did not want to continue his deposition to the FBI, the CIA and the government in general."

Blackmail right in the government's face, another threat by the mobsters created for killing and persecuting revolutionary movements in the continent.

Eduardo Soto, Posada's head lawyer, revealed that he is arranging the US citizenship for his client: "We have the application based on the valuable services rendered" by Posada Carriles to the United States, among them having been a CIA agent and having served in the US Army with an honorable discharge, Nevertheless, according to the law he is not eligible for naturalization because of his criminal record, an aggravated felony, related to the charges for which he was tried in Panama in 2004. Unfortunately for Posada and the government, that is the law.

Government attorney Gina Garret-Jackson accepted at the hearing that the "US Department of Homeland Security is concerned

about Posada Carriles' fears of being tortured in Venezuela if he is sent there." Nevertheless, the government did not call any witnesses on behalf of Venezuela nor bothered to investigate the accusations that Posada had tortured people in that country, which according to the Agreement against Torture is a limitation for granting asylum to any person that has exercised violence against others.

The only witness was called by the defense, with the purpose of slandering Venezuela. What else could do Joaquín Chaffardet, Posada Carriles' friend of 30 years, and a sworn enemy of the legitimate government of the Venezuelan people?

Defense Lawyer of Terrorism

Joaquín Chaffardet's relation with Posada Carriles goes back more than 30 years, when he began to do business with Commercial and Industrial Investigations (ICI).

According to a September 18, 1975 declassified report by Venezuelan military intelligence on "Actions by the ABDALA organization in Venezuela," among its members were Orlando Bosch Ávila and Luis Posada Carriles. On the latter it says:

"LUIS POSADA CARRILES (aka EL BAMBI). Cuban.

The subject was a DISIP Commissioner in the COPEI² administration. We learned that the US Department of State through the CIA supplied him with technical equipment for monitoring, communications interception, and the subject created an investigation agency, and in that manner keeps the Americans informed and makes investigations when so required about matters in Venezuela.

NOTE: The agency is called COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL INVESTIGATIONS, C.A. (ICI), located at Libertador Avenue – Majestic Professional Center, 7th Floor, Apt. 78, Tel. 715909. The Managing Board is formed by:

1-JOQUIN CHAFFARDET RAMOS. Venezuelan. General Manager. This subject is former Secretary General of DISIP and

² The Social Christian Party of Venezuela, better known as COPEI (*Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente*—Political Electoral Independent Organizing Committee). Founded on 1946, it was together with Democratic Action (AD) the dominant Venezuelan party between 1958 and 1993.

former member of COPEI. He lives at Julio Building, Apt. 41, Vargas Ave., Santa Fe.

2-LUIS POSADA CARRILES-General Manager (aka EL BAMBI) He lives in Los Cabriales Street-Qta. Janet-El Llanito.

3-ADOLFO REYES MEJÍAS. Substitute. Also a former DISIP officer at the time of COPEI. A resident of A Street, San Castín Residential, Apt. 50-Caurimare.

4-AUGUSTO EDGAR CORTEZ SILVA. Substitute. Lives at the office.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THIS GROUP:

At the time of the government change and the dismemberment of DISIP, it was able to get a lot of side arms, explosives and other equipment. There was talk that this improper appropriation was done in cahoots with former DISIP Inspector HERMES JOSÉ ROJAS PERALTA ID: 3185945, who at present resides in Las Palmas, Mérida Ave. -Qta. Isla-Telephone 713876. About this latter subject, it is known that he is friends with several DIM (Military Intelligence Division) officials and it is possible that they are also in “contact” with the above mentioned office. We have not dismissed the possibility that DIM agents are collaborating with said office.”

Relations between Posada and Chaffardet grew in the midst of terrorist and conspiratorial activities.

In the 1960s, Chaffardet was a DISIP informer, known at the time as DIGEPOL, a repressive political police in Venezuela, and who had true criminals among its men. His mission was to detect members and leaders in political groups contrary to the government. He had links with General Rubén Rojas Pérez, former chief of the military guard at the Presidential Palace, and former Army Chief General Hernán Rojas Pérez.

Chaffardet is very well known in Caracas for his links with organized crime in the capital’s eastern sector and with extremist elements of the opposition. The relation grew when he was “legal counsel” in Carlos Andrés Pérez’s two administrations, and his actions were related to the defense of corruption in the administration.

In May, 1998, Chaffardet founded the “Lawyers’ Association against Political and Judicial Terrorism”, according to him, a way for denouncing members of what he called “the dying judiciary who

lend themselves for terrorist actions, raise the awareness of the population about the events in the judiciary after President Hugo Chávez's victory and for fighting political and judicial terrorism in his country."

On one occasion he declared that "a way of doing politics and governing is developing in Venezuela based on the moral termination of adversaries with the objective of silencing and terrifying them."

He was the lawyer of Brigade General Hernán Rojas Pérez, who accused President Hugo Chávez, the military high command, then Minister Diosdado Cabello, and former DISIP Director Carlos Aguilera, as responsible of the events at the time of the coup d'état on April 11, 2002.

After the coup, acting as General Hernán Rojas' defense lawyer, Chaffardet presented to the Supreme Court a motion against Defense Minister José Luis Prieto and Interior and Justice Minister Diosdado Cabello for allegedly violating his client's constitutional rights to freedom of transit and privacy.

Joaquín Chaffardet, the defense's only witness at the hearing for Posada Carriles' illegal entry to the United States in 2005, was one of the advisors that Santiago Álvarez took to Panama when the Venezuelan government submitted the request for the extradition of the international terrorist.

"The star witness", as some news media dubbed him in El Paso, collaborated in an active manner with Panamanian narco-lawyer Rogelio Cruz, former Prosecutor General of the Republic of Panama, ousted for corruption, and chief counsel for Posada Carriles in Panama. According to acquaintances, his political views lean to extreme anti-Chavism.

What can be expected of a lawyer that defends terrorists?

The same thing that can be expected from a Department of Homeland Security that refused to uncover the bonds of friendship and conspiracy between both men and that keeps a terrorist arrested for illegal entry.

The Venezuelan daily *El Nacional* published a declaration by Chaffardet in relation to the extradition of the terrorist to Venezuela: "As a migratory policy, ICE (Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement) does not send people to Cuba or to countries that are believed to act on Cuba's behalf. (...) And that obviously is the case, because if Posada Carriles sets foot in Venezuela, it is a fact that on the next day he would be on a plane to Cuba."

Judge Abbott is partial to the government he represents, and therefore sees the terrorist as the White House does, as its golf player. Thus he praised the “good case” presented by the defense and declared that “unless the United States Government presents a strong case, the next step would be to postpone his deportation indefinitely.”

“He could be Adolf Hitler and we could not deny deferment if there were basis for it. By the way, I am not comparing Posada Carriles with Hitler,” said the judge. Nevertheless, that gives me the idea of the image that Judge Abbott could have of Posada, As much as you want to mistake a terrorist for a golf player, it is impossible.

Judge Abbott postponed the hearing for September 26, 2005 at the request of the government. The charade staged by the US government for protecting someone who has always served it seems endless, as it has been each time Posada and other Miami based terrorists have appeared in a US court. The US government’s complicity lies not only in the silence of how Posada entered the country, but in its double standard on terrorism –negotiating with a terrorist, but *their* terrorist.

At the hearing on migratory matters, the defendant was the Venezuelan government, an unforgivable but not unexpected immorality, when US governments have been through the years the true experts on torture, crime and war, or in present time, what they do in Iraq and Afghanistan. And if that weren’t enough, where were Posada Carriles and other Miami anti-Cuban extremists trained? At Fort Benning.

AGREEMENT SEVEN: “WINKING AT THE JUDGE”

On September 26, 2005 the actors were back on the stage. This time Judge William L. Abbott decided that terrorist Luis Posada Carriles would not be deported to Cuba or Venezuela.

Miami news media reported that Abbott wrote that “Posada could be tortured in those countries, so under the UN Convention against Torture he should not be extradited.”

Abbott ignores not only Venezuela’s reality, but also Posada’s background as a torturer in Venezuela, which can be read in the testimonials by persons who were abused by “Commissioner

Basilio”, chief of Special Operations at the Venezuelan DISIP. It can also be read in Posada’s own book, *Roads of the Warrior*.

A serious judge would argue such a claim. Abbott did not. He cannot prove that prisoners are tortured in Venezuela; neither can he prove that Hugo Chavez’s government has not kept its word.

The silence of the US government to the extradition request is the scandalous evidence of the complicity with one of the terrorists trained at Fort Benning –Luis Posada Carriles.

The White House’s golf player is Latin America’s most dangerous international terrorist.

On September 28, 2005 *El Nuevo Herald* reported that the “seven page finding was unexpectedly released on Tuesday afternoon, barely 24 hours after the Posada immigration hearing in El Paso, Texas.” The Miami daily said “the US government has explored since the beginning other deportation alternatives, but apparently it has not found a country that would accept him.”

US lawyer José Pertierra, who represents the Venezuelan government, criticized the judge’s decision, said *El Nuevo Herald*, “although he stressed that the immigration process does not impede the extradition requested by Venezuelan authorities since June.”

“It is really worrisome the way the Homeland Security Department has served Judge Abbott’s decision in a silver platter,” said Pertierra from Washington. “What really bothers me is that government lawyers had the obligation to present evidence and witnesses that Posada will not be tortured in Venezuela, and they didn’t. Is it professional incompetence or a wink at the judge?”

Pertierra, who specializes in migratory issues, said according to a report released in Washington that “this is a Chronicle of an Agreement Foretold since the day Luis Posada Carriles decided to travel to the United States. It began when FBI agents escorted him from Panama to Honduras and it continued when he stayed for several weeks in Miami without being arrested. It went on with the preferential treatment by the Homeland Security Department, who drove him in a golf cart, and has gone on until the present.”

Pertierra said the judge has granted the US government 90 days to find a third country that agrees to receive the terrorist, while government lawyers have one month to appeal the decision. “Judge Abbott’s decision is not final until the 30 days are over, unless the

government decides not to appeal and declares it, which I doubt very much,” said Pertierra.

“There are two dangers at this moment,” he added, “that the US government sends him to a third country in the next 90 days, to evade extraditing him to Venezuela, or that the United States declares it will not deport him and grants him a pardon, like it did with Posada’s buddy, Orlando Bosch.”

Cuban daily *Juventud Rebelde* reported on September 28 that Pertierra pointed out the US government’s hypocrisy. “The government lawyers’ decision not to challenge the deposition of a questionable expert presented by Posada’s lawyers is unthinkable (...) As far as I know, it is the first time in US law that the government plays with a terrorist’s defense lawyer, the judge and public opinion at the same time,” Pertierra concluded.

On Thursday, September 18, 2005, the Cuban daily *Granma* published an editorial with the title “Infamy at El Paso. Revenge in Miami.” The editorial said that “If in the case of the Cuban Five the district attorney made false charges, threatened witnesses and manipulated evidence, acts by the prosecution have been no less embarrassing in the process at El Paso, without a single argument, a single witness to refute maneuvering by the defense, as if an agreement existed for the protection of the terrorist.

“The government that on behalf of the war against terror has launched wars and sent his troops to die, is the same that today protects one of the most notorious terrorists of our time, the mastermind of the horrendous bombing of a Cuban airplane with 73 passengers on board and responsible of many other killings of Cubans and citizens from other nations.

“Washington defends one of his pawns in its criminal war against our people, in the support to Latin American dictatorships of previous decades, in the sinister operations of dirty war in Central America and in assassination plots against politicians and heads of state who are contrary to the hegemonic interests of the empire”, wrote *Granma*.

President of Venezuela Hugo Chávez Frías said that the decision by a US immigration judge to grant haven to terrorist Luis Posada Carriles was cynical.

According to Prensa Latina news agency, the Venezuelan president rejected the argument that Posada could be mistreated if de-

ported to Venezuela, as the authorities of the South American country have requested for trying the criminal responsible for the bombing of a Cuban civilian airliner in 1976.

SILENCE ABOUT POSADA CARRILES

Since then nothing was heard about the international terrorist. He might be in Texas, at El Paso Detention Center. Cuba and Venezuela have continued their struggle for justice. Solidarity actions in the United States and abroad have been constant. Posada Carriles, the man who according to the US government made an illegal entry to US territory, is resting in a room at El Paso, Texas. The terrorist is up to his old tricks while silence is again in the news.

As in every agreement, the government waited out and the appeal on the immigration judge's decision was not made. All that as part of the US government's agreement to protect Posada Carriles. Perhaps after so many agreements honored he will receive the presidential pardon from the "stupid white man", George W. Bush. "Get in and hide, and we'll see what happens" is still a probable hypothesis.

The Urban Planner

On November 22, 2005 *El Nuevo Herald*, under the headline “Weapons Seized to Cuban Exiles”, published the following report: “An icebox for transporting automatic weapons, grenades and a silencer; a strong box in a Lauderhill apartment where more weapons, gas masks, thousands of ammunition rounds and explosives were found, plus a forged Guatemalan passport sent to Hialeah by express messenger service, was the evidence used by the US government against Miami anti-Castroites.”

The report also mentioned that Santiago Álvarez Fernández-Magriñá, 64, and Osvaldo Mitat, 63, were indicted for the federal crimes of possession of arms and forged documents in a three hour hearing before Judge Andrea Simonton, who denied bail to both defendants.

“These are very dangerous weapons,” said Judge Simonton, and pointed out the potential crimes as a true danger for the community, wrote *El Nuevo Herald*. The Miami daily underscored that “in less than 48 hours the case has become important because of Álvarez close links with veteran anti Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles, wanted by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela for alleged terrorist actions.”

On November 18, 2005 *El Nuevo Herald*, under the headline “Posada Carriles’ Benefactor Arrested”, reported the detention of Santiago Álvarez by US federal agents. The article also mentioned an FBI search for evidence in Álvarez’s office in Hialeah.

The truth is that terrorist Santiago Álvarez was caught red handed with the weapons that he has always used against Cuba and other

countries in the region. It is more of the same, only that this time the “Urban Planner” did not have time for a press conference like the one he organized for his peer Posada Carriles.

Oswaldo Mitat and another person whose name was not revealed were also arrested. All of them were aboard the “Santrina”¹ when Posada Carriles entered US territory illegally.

The operation against terrorist Santiago Álvarez was coincidental with the publication of a full page advertisement on *The New York Times* on behalf of a group of relatives of the victims of the Cubana plane bombing on Barbados demanding of the US government to cease protecting terrorist Posada Carriles.

Cuba’s National News Agency reported the rhetorical questions that appeared on *The New York Times* advertisement: “Should the United States give haven to an international terrorist?” asked by the Committee of the Relatives of Victims in the terrorist bombing.

After terrorist Santiago Álvarez’s arrest, a group of Cuban counterrevolutionaries demonstrated in front of the court building while they waited for the outcome of the hearing. Among those present was José “Pepe” Hernández, an officer of the Cuban American National Foundation and an old hand at arms trafficking and funding terrorist acts against Cuba.

El Nuevo Herald.com published that “the core of the accusation is the testimony of a confidential source that informed about the transfer of the arms loaded icebox, from Lauderhill to Mitat’s hands in Miami-Dade County. The informer seems to be Gilberto Abascal, 42, a close collaborator of Álvarez’s, whose whereabouts has been unknown for the past four months.”

“Abascal was impaired due to an accident and according to an anonymous source was under medication for schizophrenia.” According to *El Nuevo*’s digital version, “he claimed that he received frequent visits from FBI agents.”

¹ On March 18, 2005, Luis Posada Carriles illegally entered the United States aboard the *Santrina*, owned by Santiago Álvarez. Although Cuba repeatedly denounced the fact, the Bush administration denied the accusations even after arresting Posada. Months later a document signed by U.S. District Attorney Alexander Acosta and Assistant U.S. Attorney Randy Hummel admitted that an FBI informer was also aboard the ship.

The publication also said that “Abascal, Álvarez and Mitat were among the crew of the boat *Santrina* that went earlier in March to Isla Mujeres, Mexico”.

By the report it would seem that it was the first time that FBI had been informed of possession of weapons, forged passports and human contraband in support of terrorism from United States’ territory against Cuba and other countries in the region. Will they this time charge the terrorists or “anti-Castroites” of illegally bearing arms?

One of the planners of the assassination plot against President Fidel Castro in Panama was Santiago Álvarez, who after being denounced to INTERPOL did not travel again to Panama for fear of being arrested. At the Posada trial’s preliminary hearings he was represented by his son, who had been sent to assist the devil himself.

Their Father's Sons

The date, the time, or the place did not matter if eventually we were granted the requested interview and it becomes the news we expected. Personally, I prefer a conversation, and I believe that I was born talking with my mother. A dialogue is better than taking notes. The interviewee usually points the way to the questions. Nevertheless, it is important to say that my appointment was with two Salvadoran terrorists.

I remembered both of them from what was reported when they were arrested for being the perpetrators of acts in 1997 and 1998 in my country. One of them, planted bombs in Havana hotels and killed young Italian businessman Fabio di Celmo. The other one, Otto René Rodríguez Llerena, was arrested when he attempted to introduce explosives in Cuba to bomb tourist facilities in the country, among them the Tropicana Night Club. Since then I despised them. I believe a human being can't stop being one. This time I rid myself of sensitivity and became just the journalist at the interview.

Raúl Ernesto Cruz León is young, white, wears glasses and is in a Cuban jail. He is willing to talk and smiles with the certainty that his answers have been the same through the years. Cruz is outspoken and his discourse centers on the blame of others. My questions will attempt to weed out his individuality so that the true Raúl Cruz speaks out.

Otto René Rodríguez Llerena is a heavyset man with thinning hair. He is not willing to talk because of his bad experiences with journalists. I was not on his list, so I asked him to agree to the interview

and give me his honest answers. He knew that in that sense he was free and that I respected his rights.

In those days Posada Carriles was an honored guest of El Renacer Prison in Panama. He talked to journalists about his well being and the special privileges he was granted. Otto Rodríguez was upset because of that and it seemed to him that Posada mocked him and Cruz, so he began to talk

What do Raúl Ernesto, Otto René and Posada Carriles have in common? What do the sons say of the father?

OTTO RENÉ RODRÍGUEZ LLERENA

Have you had the time to think about the person that put you in this situation and that today wants the world to believe that he is innocent and does not know anything about explosives, that he knows nothing about anything?

“OK. I have given some thought since the beginning of the process that I am living, and my personal thought is that I definitely made a mistake than can't be undone. It's not possible to go back, to tell a new story. It definitely was a mistake.

“Now, the person who recruited me, Posada Carriles, whom I knew as Ignacio Medina, I had not much to do with him, so I can't give you a vision of him. I just had to do with him for this issue.

“Yet, in the time I've been here I have known him better through the news, and definitely he is not a person... what can you say... straightforward, a correct person. Even if at a time he might have said that his goals were sociological and political, I don't believe him anymore, because it seems he has more of a personal objective, revenge or hate, not even against all the government structure, but against certain members of government. I believe that more specifically against the Castro brothers, and some of the *Comandantes* of the time of your Revolution. But since you tell me that he is acting innocent. I would be the last person to believe that, because I am the one who is here because of him, because in a manner of speaking he tricked me, and sure, I let myself be tricked, because it takes two to tango.

“At that time I was unable to visualize. The Cuban government requested his extradition and it was not granted. I believe it would

be to my benefit if that extradition came through. Because I have thought —maybe it won't come out that way, but I have thought about it—that the harshness with which I have been sentenced for my crime has been not only for my acts, but that I have been tried for what could have happened. I suppose that if that gentleman were extradited to Cuba it would ease my case a bit, I think. And it would be different.

“I have talked about this with some people and we thought the extradition would be granted, but later we realized that it couldn't be. Well, you know the reasons: those people have money, they move a lot of money, they move things. Too bad it couldn't be achieved then. Now it seems they are going to release him or something. I'm not sure, those are the latest news. It seems they are going to drop the charges and I don't agree, because like I said, I believe the best would be to extradite him if he has to pay for things he has done. For example, when I came here I did not know about that story of the Cubana plane. Now I know about it. I have read the books that have been written here, I have been informed by the news I received from my family, because I asked them to send me the news from my world, let's put it that way, that is, from outside the Island, and yes, I believe it really was a cold blooded murder.”

You have spoken repeatedly about Posada Carriles' extradition, that it was requested and denied. Do you believe that with Posada's extradition true justice would be met?

“Logically I would expect that. As I told you, I have felt that in my process at some time a certain part of his blame has been placed on me, and my acts did not deserve the sentence they gave me. That's why I have always felt the harshness that should fall on him has been transferred to me. I am the one who is here. When I met him he did not even give me his real name, and in all logic, yes, I believe true justice should be done.”

Can you assure that Posada Carriles or Ignacio Medina, as you knew him, is an expert on explosives? That he can obtain them easily?

“Yes, he supplied me the explosives.”

Did he give them to you personally?

“That's right. He gave them to me himself. I can't guarantee if he has access to them, but I can say that when I met him and I got myself into this, he was the one who supplied me the explosives. But

where and through whom he got them I never knew and he didn't tell me, but he sure gave them to me.

"The second time he asked me to give them to an individual here, I believe it was a greater quantity than for the bomb I planted; it was a lot more. I think that a kilo and a half. To have a kilo and a half you must get it easily, because in my country that is a considerable load."

"When he gave you the explosives, what was his argument for bringing them into Cuba? Why did he tell you that it was necessary to do the bombings?"

"The first time I planted a bomb he gave me tourist targets: the Museum of the Revolution, hotels for damaging the tourist image and prevent tourism to grow in Cuba, as in any war of erosion.

"The second time he told me I had to deliver it to someone named Félix, but he did not comment that the person knew where he had to plant it with the same objective. That's what he told me. Afterwards, at the trial, according to that agent, Félix, he declared that he had been ordered to plant it at Che's monument."

At Santa Clara?

"But what he told me was that they were for the agricultural system, Cuba's agricultural development."

Who was Juan?

"Juan was the person to whom I had to deliver the explosive. But he turned out to be a Security agent, agent Félix. The name was Juan, because I brought a small envelope with the name Juan written on it, and also money, a handbag and another explosive not in the handbag."

If they gave you the opportunity of accusing Posada for what he has done, what would you say in the accusation?

"About what he did to me?"

Yes.

"That's a hard question, because I can't see how I could accuse him in court. I don't think that would be real, because the truth is that when he recruited me I let myself be recruited, like I said a moment ago. No way. There were two parts, him and me, and I accepted to be a part of it. I was a fool."

But if they gave you the chance, what would you accuse him of?

"I would accuse him of using other people for the same objective. Like the old fox he is, he knew how to handle them, because he

approached me knowing that I had been in the military; that I worked in a security company. Probably after he knew me a bit, he realized that I wasn't well financially. He must have realized that I would fall in the trap because of my immaturity.

"So I think, like I said before, that as an old fox he knew how to recruit me. Well, I suppose that people that do that have that psychological knowledge.

"In that sense I would accuse him, because I know there have been other people that he tricked, and that were put on that road without they giving it too much thought, and according to what I've read, it's not the first time that people fall for it. Besides the other thing, that like I said before, he didn't even use his real name with me. There was deceit from the beginning."

When did you learn that Ignacio Medina was Posada Carriles?

"Here, at the trial. I identified him in a video, and said: That's Ignacio Medina. And everybody who was there said: Posada Carriles. To me he was Ignacio Medina, because actually I had never heard the name of Posada Carriles, and as I said in the trial, I did not know about the Cubana airplane. When that happened I wasn't even in El Salvador. I was studying abroad in a boarding school, finishing high school. At that age you don't understand news very well; you are interested in other things."

But from the visual point of human beings, when you know someone you can, shall we say, clinically, study the person. Did you ever think what kind of person could that man be? In what circumstances did you meet Ignacio Medina?

"I met him at a restaurant, where we were eating and drinking a few beers. At the beginning he made me believe he was interested in buying a car. Then he began talking about the struggle that allegedly he was waging for his people and for Cuban society that was truly trampled by a tyranny. It was then that he asked me if I was interested in making some money."

Were you alone with him at the restaurant or was there someone else?

"We were introduced by another person."

Was he a friend of both of you?

"He was a friend of mine, but obviously he had to know him too. I don't know if they were friends"

Do you remember his name?

“Yes, I do, but it’s not relevant. I mentioned him at the trial. I don’t believe he had anything to do, because after he realized, and being my friend, I guess he broke off relations with that gentleman.”

Do you think so? After all this time, have you had any news from that friend?

“Yes, he has sent his greetings through my family.”

And has he mentioned the relation with Posada?

“Not at all. I know him well. We went to school and grew up together. I can have an idea of the kind of people he is. Of course, you can’t guarantee anyone, I can’t tell you if after five years my friend has changed, but at the time he introduced him to me as an acquaintance that sat with us at the table. I was waiting for my friend, and suddenly he came with that person. And he introduced him: “This is so and so.”

And how did he know that you were willing to collaborate? Did he suggest that you come to Cuba?

“Yes, but like I said, not right then. First he said he was interested in buying a car. I worked in a company that sold cars, so that’s how he came on to me. I gave him my card and told him to visit me and I would gladly put him in touch with a salesman. I think he even bought a used car. I helped him and introduced him to a salesman. And then I invited him to a beer, to have lunch, and so on, little by little. He must have practice in this kind of thing, until he mentioned the issue and offered me that thing. Later on, when he came by my office, he came alone, not with the friend that introduced us.”

Did he sweeten things up or did he tell you outright what you had to do in Cuba if you accepted to come?

“The first time he asked me if I was interested in making some money, and he also talked about his political things, let’s say, I don’t know, about the political struggle that he said he had; that the people here.. I don’t know... if I wanted to make some money.

“Today I think that if it really were a political struggle, I mean, really that thing, the hardest work he would have had to do was perhaps to convince me ideologically, convince the persons that he had recruited that his struggle was truly just; but he didn’t say much about that, but at one moment he realized that for some money I would do whatever he wanted. You know how things are economi-

cally in our countries,. And how it was there then. For example, at that time the colón in relation to the dollar, \$1,000 dollars were almost 10,000 colons, and that's something. He took advantage, because if it had been in the other sense that I told you, he would have been forced to convince me ideologically, me and any other persons. I have seen it. That's part of what I truly admire of the government here, they work that pretty much, the ideological thing. What you want to do with Posada, to have him extradited here, it would be the best thing for me, and logically, for you, so you can do justice too.

Did you think at the time that Posada Carriles was a rich man? Did he give you that much money?

Well, he paid for the trip, one thousand dollars, and all expenses here. It wasn't as if he was rich, but he had money, because if I had it I wouldn't have needed to complicate myself in that situation in order to take a vacation. I would have gone somewhere else —Cancun, for example.”

And do you really believe that the money came out of Posada's pocket? Because I understand that when he went to that place where you worked he wanted to buy an automobile and asked you for a cheap car, a used car. How could he buy a cheap used car and offer you money? Didn't you ever think about that in all these years?

“Look, at the time, to be honest with you, I didn't think about the matter. I was only interested in the money, seeing how I earned it, because if I had thought about it I wouldn't be here.

“In time, what can I say? According to what I see and hear, the news, television, he has been in Panama, El Salvador. At the time I met him there was a time in which he disappeared, and he told me that he had been to Arabia, one of those countries, doing a job with irrigation systems, and he disappeared for a time.”

But he has money or he gets it.

“Well, in order to travel around... When I met him he wanted to buy a used car, and when I saw him again, that allegedly he had returned from that trip, the car was not the same, and he had traded it, always a used one, but another one. And don't be mistaken, a used car in my country is cheaper than a new car, but you still need money.”

You say you watch TV, that you read the newspapers. I imagine your family brings you news from your country.

Did you learn later about Posada's interview in *The New York Times*? Did you hear about it?

"Yes."

And did you learn about Posada's statement that he received money from the Cuban American National Foundation?

"Yes, I read the whole interview."

You have thought about it all this in time. Have you thought about the link that could have existed between those offers of money and where it came from?

"Look, like I said, he never said that to me. I can imagine it, I suppose it is so, but as he himself said in the interview, it was given to him by the Foundation. I also knew, from what I've read that there was or is someone with a problem similar to mine. Captured for bringing explosives—that has to do with the Foundation—and that while he was in prison or while he is in prison, the Foundation gives him one hundred dollars a month for his needs. I don't know who he is, that's impossible to know, but you know, things get around. Someone told me and I believe it, I think anything is possible.

Why doesn't the Foundation take care of you?

"I don't know about that, because this gentleman, when I was arrested, it seems he talked with my father and told him I was in prison. My father wanted to talk to him."

With Posada Carriles?

"With Ignacio Medina. He wanted to talk to him to know what it was all about, why he was telling him that, and it seems this man told him to wait for him at a restaurant, but he never showed up."

Have you ever received military training? For example, have you taken courses, where? What have you done in that field?

"I studied, I was in the military. Then I retired, I asked for my discharge and went to work in a company."

In the military in El Salvador?

"In El Salvador."

And abroad?

"No."

Were you ever in Fort Benning?

"Yes."

What courses did they give you?

“Guerrilla warfare, combat.”

Did you by any chance learn later that Posada was also at Fort Benning?

“Yes, well, I don’t know, because Fort Benning is very big.”

At different moments.

“Right. I was there taking a course in guerrilla warfare, a course to become an officer in the Salvadoran Army. They say that Posada Carriles was taking... I don’t know... a political course. As I said, I don’t know, Fort Benning is a big place. It has schools for everything—basic infantry, basic guerrilla warfare, even officer courses, like the one I went to. I guess there is a political school and it was the one this gentleman attended. There are also courses for General Staff and all that.”

“What is your idea of a terrorist? And if that idea had someone’s name, how would you name him, based on your personal experience and knowledge?”

“Definitely a terrorist is a person that causes terror on people for a determined reason—creating panic, instability, etc. For example, I have been charged of being a terrorist. I’m not saying that I didn’t commit an act of terrorism; I did commit an act of terrorism. But committing it doesn’t make me a terrorist. I believe that to be a terrorist you have to have it in your blood, or making a career of it. I mean, it isn’t like one day you race your car in the streets and maybe even win. That’s only one race. A race driver makes of that act a way of life. And I believe a terrorist is the one that makes a way of life of that act of attempting against others. So like I said, I committed an act of terrorism, but I don’t believe I’m a terrorist. I made a mistake.”

Because you don’t have it in your blood.

“In the first place for that reason, because to be a terrorist you have to be willing to kill in cold blood. But I can tell you that one of the reasons I had for leaving the military in El Salvador was that at some time of the war in El Salvador between those FMLN people and the rightists it became a dirty war¹. I didn’t want to be involved

¹ The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) is a political party in El Salvador that was formerly a revolutionary guerrilla organization. In 1980 the FMLN was formed as an umbrella group of four left wing guerilla organizations

because it was an illogical war, nothing, and the only consequence was the ruin of the country.”

Don't you think that those explosives also could have cost innocent lives, just like in El Salvador, like you said, that had nothing to do with that situation? On one occasion you admitted it, you left the country and returned. Did Posada Carriles convince you of that alleged struggle he was fighting?

“He didn't really convince me. I was only interested in the money. The struggle was his thing. So much so that the second time he asked me to bring the explosive to that gentleman, to Juan, I was very clear and told him: 'I'm not going to bomb another place; I'm not interested.' It was clear to me that it was to bomb irrigation systems. I didn't even know there was a monument to Che.”

You said that you left the army in El Salvador for those same reasons. How is it that the second time you came to Cuba you did not make the same analysis? Perhaps you would not be here today.

“I told you before, I left the army. When I met this man, Ignacio Medina, I had been a civilian for ten years. I left the army in 1986. I began a new life, got married, had a daughter, and worked for ten years. At the time I met this gentleman —after those ten years—, I had marriage trouble, and also financial troubles with my children's studies. He offered me these things, and because of that immaturity that I explained it seemed to me the easiest way out of those problems, after being married for ten years and because I wanted my children to get ahead. As I said, unfortunately I made a mistake, and here I am.”

You say that you committed a terrorist act. Are you a terrorist?

“As I told you before, I don't think I am a terrorist.”

Whom do you consider a terrorist, the man who recruited you?

“Yes. I mean, he is a terrorist not because he recruited me, because that's not a terrorist act, but from what I've known about him.”

and the Salvadoran Communist Party to fight the Salvadoran government. After peace accords were signed in 1992, all armed FMLN units were demobilized and their organization became a legal political party. The FMLN is now one of the two major political parties of the country.

About whom.

“Posada Carriles, Ignacio Medina. For what I’ve known about him—the bombing of the plane, the other persons that are now arrested and that have also been recruited, maybe not directly by him, but through him. With the stories I’ve learned here, and by what my family has informed me—for I asked them to bring me news about this gentleman’s life over there—he’s had a career, a terrorist evolution. It’s like if you asked me about bin Laden. I don’t know him, but according to his story he is a person that lives for that. Perhaps bin Laden doesn’t make money, but invests it in terrorism. Posada Carriles perhaps does make money, but I don’t think he has as much money as the other one. Well, it’s the same thing. In my problem, in my process, in my environment, in this issue, he is the terrorist I know. I didn’t know him at that time. I let myself be recruited.”

So you can assure by your analysis—as you were telling me—that Posada Carriles’ objective—based also on the arguments you have been given, what you heard, what you read—has always been Fidel Castro, the Castro brothers. Is Posada capable of assassinating the Cuban President for the sake of that entire struggle?

“Yes, I believe so, and not even you doubt it. I imagine it is; better still, I suppose, I would even say that I am positive, and even more now. I suppose he has attempted it.”

Otto, if you found yourself face to face with Ignacio Medina—Posada Carriles—and he asked you again to bring explosives to Cuba, what would you say to him?

“You think I could talk to this guy again?”

I’m asking you.

“No, I couldn’t talk to that gentleman again. Sometimes I’m impulsive. After the time I’ve spent here I’ve changed, but I’m pissed. And I rather... I don’t know... would like to get even.”

How would you do it?

Let’s not get into that. I’m not leaving here to become a murderer. He is a person that I believe... For starters, I don’t think we’ll ever meet again. And if we meet he is not someone I would like to speak with, specially because of the interview he gave and he spoke about my fellow countryman Cruz León, and he said something like, “Yes, that poor fellow is as good as executed.” If I were Posada I would act differently. If the people I recruited were captured I would be loyal to

them. Well, if they caught them I'll be helping them, I'll assist them economically. I can't help you if you are imprisoned over there, but I'm going to help your families. But no, he simply said: 'Poor fellow, he's as good as executed'."

Are you aware that you are the perpetrator of a terrorist act?

"I am well aware of it. I have not denied it. And also, like I told the Cuban people at the proper moment and I say it again now, I am sorry, because it definitely was something that shouldn't have happened to me. Like I told you, I left the military so I wouldn't commit an act that would be against my moral principles up to that moment. Unfortunately, we all have moments of weakness, of need, of immaturity; I had bad luck, as this same gentleman says. I had bad luck. Because he referred to a person, I won't mention that person. I don't want to mention him. I'm talking about myself. I had the bad fortune of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

When did he say it?

"When he mentioned the person who died, the Italian. He spoke of him in that manner, speaking of someone who died. But I'm talking about me, because I was at the wrong place at the wrong time also when unfortunately I met him and got involved in this matter.

Now that you mention it, what do you think about that expression of Posada on the death of an innocent person?

"I believe I expressed it already with the words I said. When in my country—my family, my culture, my education—, when we speak of someone who died, we do it with respect, no matter who he is, because he is not in this world any more. We believe in God. If God called him is for a reason, and may he rest in peace. To speak like that is as if we said: 'Poor fool, he died for being nosy.' Nobody dies for being a fool, because nobody wants to die. He shouldn't have talked like that and neither what he said about Cruz when he said: 'That so and so already executed him.' I mean, giving him up as dead. He is simply showing that life, no matter whose life, has no value at all for him."

Otto, what would you say to people whom Posada Carriles is trying to deceive masquerading as a harmless and sick old man?

"That they should open their eyes, because already there are five fools of us here. What's the use of more? They should open their

eyes and see reality. It's like they say, 'A lion is not as fierce as depicted.' With the five of us that went down as fools, it isn't logical nor necessary that more people let themselves be fooled; be recruited or be fooled into believing what is not true. Because like I told you, he couldn't even meet my father face to face and tell him that in a way and at a given time because of him I was in this. He hid and nobody knows what became of him.

"Initially he seems to be a person without any moral values, or with weird values. Like I said, I was wrong then, I was at the wrong place and at the wrong time. We are trying to get by."

And with all those arguments, what about real moral values?

"You mean mine?"

Posada Carriles'. You said maybe he has no moral values, or he does.

"The problem is that moral values may be good or bad, because for him killing people for an objective could be a moral value. But moral values, which is what I mean, he has none."

And if those are his values, killing people for something, doing things for something, do you share those values?

"I just told you my opinion only by saying how he talks about a person that is dead."

RAÚL ERNESTO CRUZ LEÓN

Why did you come to Cuba for the first time?

"The first time I came was in July on a mission I'd been ordered, to plant the explosive devices.

Who gave you the order?

"I was sent by Francisco Chávez Abarca. My mission was to plant those two bombs, which I did. I planted the bombs and went back."

How did you meet this person?

"I met this Francisco through another friend. Well, actually he was not a friend, but an acquaintance that was a friend of a friend, Erdwin, and through him I met Chávez, who was involved in all those strange things."

Did you meet him at work?

“I worked at a company that dealt with artists, but I was helping this friend, Erdwin, in a business he was starting selling cars. I was studying business administration at the university and he thought I could help him running his business. In the beginning I cooperated with him; just a few months, because my job didn’t leave much free time.”

So you met Chávez and right away became friends?

“Not a real friendship, but a somewhat mediocre relation; not a friendship going out for drinks, the beach, not that.”

How was this man’s personality?

“He was an unsociable person. Like . . . , I don’t know, careful, like he was always hiding something, very distrustful too.”

And how did he make this proposition?

“I think that through the months that he had in the car rental business, because we met many times. I am a person, or was, that liked extreme sports, looking for the adrenaline, and all that. I loved them since I was a boy, 15 years old, I think. I rode a BMX bike, rolling down bleachers, jumping; then I got into surfing, and then many sports. And I also was crazy about guns for different reasons. In the first place because I come from a military family. My father, my uncles have been in the military, and I always liked that career, since I was a boy. I went to military school, but I was uncomfortable with the atmosphere and got off. But guns were my favorite.

“I went to a place where there were shooting competitions, a shooting gallery. I met this Francisco several times there. I believe he took into account all those facets of my life, like he analyzed me. That’s a conclusion I reached here, not over there.”

How did you learn about explosives and everything related to them?

“Well, because he taught me. He was the one who trained me. He saw that I liked weapons, the thrill. He showed me a package with C-4 plastic explosive. One day he went to my home and said: ‘Look what I have here’, and showed it to me. I never really had contact with C-4, but with other explosives. I studied that at military school and learned about them: grenades, mines and those things you learn there, but not C-4. Then it caught my attention, I was interested. I believe that’s what he was looking for. So he told me: ‘I’m going to show you about this.’ He took me to a beach and I fell in the trap right away.”

Do you remember what beach it was?

“Yes, it was a private beach, very small and private.”

Whose beach it was? Did you ever know?

“No, I mean private because it was secluded, very difficult access, and with few beach houses. Very small.”

Did he teach you everything there? Did he detonate the explosive?

“No, he taught me there. He already had everything armed and only introduced the automatic capsule and planted it in some rocks. I believe they call it here ‘dog’s teeth’² big rocks. Then I remember that that I drew back, because I thought it was going to be a huge explosion, that rocks would fly everywhere. And well, he detonated it and I was very excited.”

Was it then that Chávez Abarca tells you about the mission in Cuba?

“No, not then, but later.”

Did you at any time ask Chávez when would the trip be, when would the mission be, if everything was ready, and he answered that it would have to wait, that it had to be thought out?

“Oh, sure, but it wasn’t me who asked. It was him who told me.”

He told you?

“I asked him when it was going to be, because at that time I didn’t want to come, because I was working in that company hiring artists, not only musicians, but also variety artists. At the time the company had brought a circus to the country, and the boss had the habit of unloading all the work on me, so it was impossible for me. That’s why I told Chávez I couldn’t do it.”

After all this time, when did you know that Posada Carriles was behind all this?

“I knew about it when I already was here, when I had been arrested, because Francisco and Cue... they were the ones who said that he was behind all this, and after they confirmed it at the trial, when he testified that it was Posada Carriles. It came out in an interview in a US TV program, I think. But I don’t know the name.”

² A popular name in Cuba for sharp-edged rocks of coral origin.

What did he say?

Well, he said that sure, he had sent me. I don't remember the exact words, only that he declared he had sent me, and when the woman journalist asked him if he was concerned about me been executed he said, that he didn't care. That's what he said, but he accepted that he had masterminded everything, that he had sent me, not Francisco."

That means you are aware that Chávez Abarca was related with Posada Carriles?

"Now, after Posada's declaration, when I heard the interview. Over there, I don't know. Maybe he was at my side on an occasion, but I don't remember him."

You never had a clue? For example, when you were arrested by Cuban authorities you collaborated and made several telephone calls to Chávez Abarca. You never contacted him, left him several messages, and on one occasion he called you back. When you asked him to help you leave Cuba, what did he tell you?

"When I asked for help for leaving Cuba?"

Didn't he tell you that he had to consult somebody?

"Oh, yes, he told me he would call me later; that he had to make a consultation. Because he advised me to leave by the airport, and I said no, that they had my Identikit picture and that they were waiting for me, and that I wanted him to take me out. Then he said that he had to make a consultation."

Who with?

"He didn't tell me. I suppose it was with Posada."

Why do you suppose it was with Posada?

"Because afterwards I learned that Posada was behind all this, it was obvious that Posada was Chávez's boss. I don't know if there was someone else in between, I swear, I really don't know."

What is terrorism?

"Look, I lived with terrorism since I was a child, because in my country, you know, there was a twelve year civil war and there was much terrorism. I lived with terrorism, seeing bodies on the highways, the heads of the mayors on fence posts, bombs that exploded in the city, and I'll never forget those images. At that time I had an idea of what terrorism was, I mean, that thing about doing harm,

but there were lots of dead. From what we were taught over there, Cuba was hell where there was much evil, but after being here I find that it's totally different from what they teach you there, I mean, in my country, of what is communism."

Why did you come, then? For a cause?

"No, I really came for the money."

When Chávez Abarca gave you the explosives, what was his argument? What should you do with them?

"When he told me, 'You are going to Cuba', I said: 'Cuba? Are you crazy? That was my answer, because the image I had of Cuba was like East Germany, a place where there is a great wall and everybody inside is armed, tanks, and all those things. And I remember I said that same thing to my interrogators. When I got here, I expected to see tanks in the streets and everyone in camouflage. That was the idea I had then. So I said to him: 'You are crazy, you are sending me to a place where you can't get in.' He said I was wrong. That's when he confessed that he had already come to plant a bomb and that there was no problem."

Why did he tell you to bring the bomb? What did he say when he gave you the bomb?

"He didn't say anything about politics, if it was to overthrow Fidel Castro. No, no, he didn't say anything about it, because he was careful. I was with him and, what can I say, I didn't ask and came. And I, with that adventurous spirit, told myself: 'I believe I can; I feel I can. I thought it was very difficult, but I felt like doing it and I did.'"

But Posada has talked about you in interviews.

"Yes, I've heard him. Yes, he talked about me, that he was the one that sent me; but he didn't do it directly. I mean, he didn't say to me: 'You'll go there, I'll teach you how to arm this.' That's not the way it was, because the only one that taught me how to arm that thing was Chávez Abarca, and it was precisely at my home, where he arrived and began to teach me how to arm the bomb."

Did you ever ask him where that explosive came from? Did you want to know?

"Not really, because of the way Chávez was. You asked him something, for example, and he was always evasive. He was evasive for everything. I remember I never asked. That was not my thing. In

these countries I don't think it's easy to get explosives, but guns yes. There is a black market where these things are moved."

How did you feel when you heard that Posada Carriles had declared that you were as good as dead? How did you feel at that moment?

"At that moment I was outraged; that's the word. I was outraged, because I expected that if he had used me for his means, to achieve an objective, which was that one, to come here and plant bombs, to make some noise, which was what... Because that's what Chávez told me... because they gave me the mission to plant them, gave me a list... Chávez gave me a list, and that I had to plant them in the lobbies of those places, so then I told him that he was crazy, that a lot of people could get killed. So I told him I wouldn't do that, kill people, that I wouldn't come. So he told me: 'It doesn't matter.' No, I told him, if I go I go alone, I don't want anybody with me, I mean, I don't want anyone to see me in Cuba. I go in alone and I come out alone. I'll take measures so that nobody gets killed. Because really, I'll be honest with you, from the beginning I never thought about killing people, but it is obvious that things got out of hand, but it wasn't about killing people. So I took my measures, because the mission they gave me was to plant them. It would have been different if they had told me to plant them outside, I don't know, somewhere else. I'd had looked for a place where there were less people. In fact, at the interrogations they realized, I was... The last bomb I planted on the second trip I had to plant it at La Bodeguita del Medio³; I had La Bodeguita del Medio as a last option, to plant it there, because it was the last place I'd seen and where I had gone, and I went, but I couldn't get in, because it was noon and the place was full. They told me it was full, and to come back later, to go to the bar. I went to La Bodeguita's bar and it was packed, full of people, and right there I thought; 'No, I can't plant it here, because there is going to be a bunch of dead people.'"

But you planted it later. What happened?

"Yes, I did. I went back and planted it in the restaurant, on the second floor, where there wouldn't be any customers at that time.

³ One of Havana's most famous restaurants. Cruz planted the bomb on September 4, 1997 and it went off at 11 p.m. No one was wounded, but there was considerable damage to the restaurant.

Why did you plant it that second time?

“The bomb? I planted it and I left. It went off at night, but I expected it to go off much later. I had problems with the calculator’s chronometer. There was a button that wasn’t working and I could not set it for later, so I let it go at that, and I planted it there, and from what I heard from the interrogators here there were some wounded and I saw some, I don’t know if they really came as witnesses, but there were wounded, because there were people.”

You knew that after you had been arrested. Why didn’t you warn that there was a bomb at the restaurant?

“Look, that was survival instinct, and at the moment I had not accepted my guilt, I was denying everything, my role in the events, knowing that I had planted that bomb. So I said to myself: ‘When the bomb goes off, they are going to think that the guy planting the bombs is loose. I really was wrong. I know I was wrong. It is a huge error, but that was what I thought at the time. Imagine, I was here, at Villa Marista, and they were questioning me, and I was denying everything, and it’s not an easy situation, there is a lot of tensions and my instinct made me do that, always thinking that at that time there wouldn’t be any people, because I had seen several places, several bars and restaurants that are closed about ten o’clock, and I presumed that the place would be closed at ten or eleven, but no, there were people, although thank God nobody died.’”

At the Copacabana, when you planted the bomb in the metal ashtray, was there anybody nearby?

“Well, at that moment there was no one.”

Didn’t you think that somebody could be around when the bomb went off?

“Look, I had been there the previous day and had been sitting down at those hotels, checking the time, timing things, seeing people, the places where I would plant the explosives. For example, at the Tritón and the Chateau Miramar hotels I had to change places. I was looking for an area where people wouldn’t be close by. I didn’t do much checking, because I’d need about two months going to the same places, but I had an idea where I could put the explosives, where I could do what I had been sent to do, to make noise, not to cause damage, deaths.”

There was one death.

“Yes, unfortunately,”

A young man like you.

“Yes.”

In time, what have you thought about this young man’s death, what his family has gone through, of what you have caused?

What I told you at the beginning of the interview. That is something I am going to carry with me, that stain, because I try to imagine. I see his father quite often on TV, and I see him with pain. I put myself in his place, in his family’s place and I think of all the pain I caused. These words are not going to bring him back to them, I know, but the worst thing that happened was that death, because that death should never have happened.”

But you knew that it could happen.

No. Well, that it could happen, yes, it’s true, but I was certain it wasn’t going to happen.”

How could you be sure? The shock wave could reach a person walking by.

“Exactly. I had to... ¿how can I say...? Unfortunately it had to happen, for at that moment... and the worst part is that he wasn’t even close. I made that great mistake of placing the bomb in the metal ashtray. When I placed the bomb I did not think it was metal, I thought it was some other material, and a metal ashtray with a bomb in it becomes a fragmentation bomb. I never thought it was that, so unfortunately it hit him where he was sitting.”⁴

Did you hear what Posada Carriles said about this young man’s death?

“Yes, I believe it was in the same interview.”

What did you hear?

“I don’t know, that the boy was at the wrong place, something like that; at the wrong time and at the wrong place, and that he would sleep like a baby. I think that’s what he said.”

And what do you think about that declaration?

“Well, I don’t know if he can sleep like a baby. I know I can’t.”

After you understood and analyzed, according to your declarations, that through the years you have linked

⁴ On September 4, between 12:11 p.m. and 12:31 p.m., three bombs went off at the Copacabana, Tritón, and Chateau Miramar hotels. The bomb that exploded at the Copacabana hotel was the one that killed Italian tourist Fabio Di Celmo.

Posada's role to the events in which you participated... do you watch TV, read the papers, and have access to books?

"Yes."

Are you aware of what is happening in Panama with Posada Carriles? He says that he didn't do anything, that he is innocent. What do you think about that?

"Yes, sure, I've seen the news and it's very hard to make people believe, or the world, that he has done nothing. Some months ago he bragged about things he has done. I believe it is difficult for him to go back on his word and say that it never happened, that he has nothing to do with that. I see it as very difficult.

What have you concluded about your role in the events?

"A lesson?"

Yes, if it has been a lesson.

"Of course. That nothing can be gained through violence, I think that with any kind of violence nothing can be gained. There are other means that perhaps can be used before violence, because nothing good comes out of it.

But you came to Cuba with explosives on two occasions, you were aware of what you were doing.

"That's right. In spite of being 26 years old, I believe that maybe I had the mind of a 15 year old. Not that I was a child, but although it may seem funny, I came here with the idea of being a kind of hero, as a result of seeing movies and that, that's the reason that made me come. A movie that impressed me and influenced me was one by Sylvester Stallone and Antonio Banderas, one called... No, I'm mistaken; it's one by Stallone called *The Specialist*, where he did those things, placing bombs and all that.

What does being a hero mean to you?

"Well, a hero for me is someone that saves someone from someone, in plural.

But the bomb you placed at the Copacabana killed someone.

"Unfortunately. That's what I said before. When I came, my objective in the first place was not to kill anyone, but to place the bombs, cause material damage and make noise. Of course, I had been told what they were interested in. I say *they* to include Posada and all of them, but it was really Chávez Abarca who called me,

and that's what they were looking for, that those bombs make a lot of noise.

Do you think that Chávez Abarca paid you all the money that he had received for your trip to Cuba?

"No, I guess not."

Does he still owe you money?

"He owes me money from the first trip. Since the first trip.

Why did you come on the second trip if he still owed you money?

"I'm telling you..., what's more, I'm here and I ask myself, how the hell I came here? Like he fooled me, sweet-talked me into coming, I don't know. But nothing like that really happened. I came to feel again that previous experience of planting the bombs, that adventure, because at that time that what it really was for me, an adventure.

So now you know that it was Posada Carriles who paid Chávez Abarca. Chávez recruited you. That part is accepted even by Posada himself and you knew it from that Posada interview in *The New York Times*. At present that man is standing trial in Panama because of an assassination plot against President Fidel Castro, which also would have caused the death of many people, thousands of people, and he wants to appear before public opinion as an innocent man, as someone who is harmless, unable to do what you were paid for doing in Cuba. What is your opinion?

"Look, I don't know. Maybe he has lost his mind, that gentleman went crazy, or he has some nerve and wants to change his past history; but that is difficult, very difficult.

What past history he wants to change?

"His history, you know, what he has done, beginning with the thing in Barbados. Including now, recently —because I hadn't had the chance—, I read a lot about that and I was impressed. There is a book, *Scars on the Soul*, I think it's the title, and I read the story about CU-455⁵, and I was very much impressed with that story, because I believe it's one the greatest crimes ever committed, and all

⁵ CU-455 was the number of the Cubana flight bombed over Barbados.

of them he has on his conscience will be very difficult to change, he can't change anything nor hide it."

Yet, you are here in jail, you caused the death of a young man, a tourist, a person, a human being. Posada Carriles is in Panama, meets with all the journalists he wants and rejects others. He is denying all those things. What can you say to those people?

"To him? To Posada Carriles?"

No, no, to the people he is trying to fool into believing that he has never caused the death of a human being, that he never ordered bombings.

"Well, look, I don't know for a fact, but only what he told me. He even has a book I haven't read yet, *Roads of the Warrior*, something like that is the title of the book. I heard he wrote it, that it's part of his life. And it seems he wrote about the things he has done, his sabotages, his crimes, all those things. So I would say that it couldn't be clearer. I don't know why they are trying to give him another image in order to save him, to set him free. He is responsible for all that.

If you had Chávez Abarca and Posada side by side, what would you do? What would you tell them? Have you thought about that in all these years?

Of course. I don't know, I could tell them so many things. First, speaking from a selfish point of view, because they set me up, because they threw me into a war that is not really mine. I obviously accepted out of ignorance. I would tell them that they don't even have a conscience. At least Posada doesn't have one. I don't think I could touch his conscience and say to him: 'Don't do this anymore.' I don't think so. That's very hard.

I don't picture you saying that to him, because Posada publicly attacked you.

"Right. Yes, no. The thing is that I can't be on the same level he is and say: 'You are a heel and I hope you die.' I can't. It isn't that I respect him, I don't, not in the least. What happens is that in the state I am in, as a person guilty of an act, of several acts, I know that I have on my conscience the death of that young man, and his family is still mourning him. I am conscious of all that, I can't... all of that has made me reconsider and I am a different person. Look,

maybe you won't believe me, but I am not the same Raúl of six years ago. No, I'm not any more. I believe that my friends that haven't seen me since I was arrested, maybe they wouldn't recognize me, they wouldn't recognize me.

What has caused that change?

"The reconsideration on all the damage I caused in Cuba. I have been reconsidering on the same thing for six years, thinking on why that boy had to die, why those people are hurt, wounded in several ways, physically, psychologically, with their wounds.

Are you a terrorist?

"Unfortunately yes, I'm a terrorist. I have to accept it, because now I can say: Not any more. I was before, but not anymore.

Is Chávez Abarca a terrorist?

"Of course he is."

And Posada Carriles?

"The father of all terrorists. What's more, he said he could send a lot of more people and, well, there are all those Central Americans that came after me.

Raúl Ernesto, you read the press, you watch TV, you are interested in these matters. What do you think about the 5 Cuban heroes that have been jailed in the United States?

"Well, you can imagine."

Have you read about it?

"Yes, not only read, but I have listened. I have seen "The Round Table", the news.

And what do you think?

"Well, the same thing that everybody here thinks, all the Cubans: that they are unjustly imprisoned. But I hope that it has a favorable outcome. I admire many things of your government, I mean, the support it gives to all its people. Look at that enormous support that those five heroes have, not only from your government, but from the people. I have seen those samples of solidarity.

Do you know why they are in jail?

"Yes, of course."

Do you think that is terrorism?

"No, of course not. I think they shouldn't be called that, terrorism. According to what I've seen and heard, they were fighting against terrorism launched from the United States against Cuba. I think it

would be terrorism if they killed someone there, a diplomat, planted a bomb.”

In all these years you have been in jail, what are your greatest concern and your greatest desire?

“My greatest concern is growing old in prison, that is my greatest concern. I really wouldn’t want that. My greatest desire is to let everyone know—I wish it could be known in the whole world—that nothing can come out from what I did, nothing will be gained through terrorism.”

Fabio’s father is crying out for justice and the people of Cuba are crying out for justice because of everything that has been done against it through terrorism. What can you say to Fabio’s father, whose son cannot even grow old in prison?

“Anything I can say will never compensate the loss I caused to that family. From the beginning I have sincerely expressed the great sorrow that I feel because of that act. I never thought it could happen. In spite of the circumstances, I felt I had everything under control. What I can say to Fabio’s father is that I hope he can forgive me. I have seen him and he seems a noble person. It is very hard and I can understand if he tells me to go to hell, because it’s the least he can do. But the least I can do is ask him and his family for forgiveness from the bottom of my heart for having caused them such a great grief, a grief they will carry for all their lives. I wish... I don’t know... I wish I could do something to change this—I have always thought it—, but I don’t know what I could do.

Is Raúl Ernesto Cruz León the only guilty party of the bombings in Havana or of the bombs that you planted in Havana? Is he the only guilty one?

“No, of course not. I’m not the only guilty one. We have talked already about Chávez, about Posada, and also about the Foundation.”

And if I asked you about the greatest degree of culpability of these acts?

“Look, something I did learn is that they gave me the means, they gave me everything; so, in a sense I am the least guilty of all. Not just because I’m telling you, but because I have analyzed the circumstances and I have reached the conclusion that I simply was their tool.”

If you believe you are the least guilty, then you must know who the guiltiest one is.

“Of course.

Who?

“I believe it’s Posada Carriles, or the Foundation, which is the same, or part of the same.

Anything else you would like to say? How have you been treated in all these years in prison?

“I am very grateful for the way we have been treated in prison. We have a reeducator who is very professional. It isn’t that she treats us well, because that’s not the intention, but to make the reclusion that we are going through less hard. Remember that unfortunately I am a foreigner and my family lives far away, and we are months without seeing anyone, with the exception of religious assistance. It’s a priest that comes to see us almost every month, and in prison, well, they are very professional, all of them, really.

Have Chávez Abarca and Posada Carriles ever worried about your family? Have they sent any assistance? Has someone been concerned about your family’s fate?

Well, my mother couldn’t explain who it was, but there was a person that offered help, but on the condition that she had to make a declaration against the Cuban government, so she didn’t accept. But not Posada Carriles and Chávez, no. They have never helped my family nor have they been worried about them. I remember that when I told him that if anything happened to me on this last trip... Chávez told me: ‘No, no, we are going to take care of you, pay for the lawyers and get you out of there. And to this day, nothing. I’m here alone, alone with my family, because not even my government is helping me. The government can’t do much, really, because they don’t even have relations with Cuba, but I think that at least through a third country something could have been done. But nothing, here we are.’⁶

⁶ Transcription of the interview by the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television’s Center for Analysis and Monitoring.

The Government of the United States Attempts to Save Posada and Expose Terrorism to the World

In late December, *El Nuevo Herald* reported as front page news that “the US government is discussing whether to grant parole to anti Castro activist Luis Posada Carriles 90 days after a judge’s decision temporarily postponed his deportation to Cuba or Venezuela.”

El Nuevo said that in “a communiqué issued in late December by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), it was made known to Posada’s lawyers that the detainee’s status will be revised on January 24.”

The note, signed by Donald George, an ICE official at El Paso, points out that the analysis of the case will take into account if Posada may represent a danger to the community and if in the future he would be willing to appear regularly before the authorities.

“This means that the government is going to revise absolutely everything in relation to my client,” said Posada’s lawyer Eduardo Soto, “his record, his service in the US Army, his permanence in Venezuela, even the place where he would reside and who would be his sponsors.”

The government’s decision was made shortly before the 90-day limit of a judge’s decision to grant Posada protection under the International Agreement against Torture, and decree his permanence on US territory unless Washington finds a third country to deport him to.

According to the report, a decision to release Posada from jail or to keep him detained could be made in the following 60 days. “However, the announcement about the revision of custody by ICE delays

the possibility of legal actions by the defense until all administrative appeals on the case have expired,” concluded *El Nuevo Herald*.

Meanwhile, Venezuela’s request for extradition still stands, since Posada is charged with the 1976 bombing of a commercial airplane with 73 passengers onboard. On January 24, Soto should submit significant documentation to sustain Posada’s release on parole. Posada Carriles has been detained in El Paso since May 17, 2005.

The US government is trying to save Posada and expose terrorism to the world. How else can be explained that on March 22, 2006, news sources from Washington reported that the terrorist would remain in custody of US authorities for an undetermined period of time?

The Brandenton Herald in Florida reported that Posada Carriles will be detained by US immigration authorities “until a foreseeable future”, although the intention to deport him is still open.

The newspaper quoted a report by Immigration and Customs Enforcement that the criminal Posada “will not be released in the near future and his case will be extensively revised in order to determine where he could be sent eventually.”

What the US government is really doing is announcing to the world that a terrorist will take to the streets of any city with precise orders.

Actually it is not true that Posada Carriles will take again to the streets. The truth is that what has always been convenient is that he makes his war through the roads of the world. It is not the first time that Posada has made an illegal entry to the US. This is the first time that Cuba has denounced his permanence in the US.

POSADA CARRILES: A THREAT TO US NATIONAL SECURITY

On March 31, 2006, *ElNuevoHerald.com* reported that “the United States believes that anti Castro activist Luis Posada Carriles should remain in custody because he is a threat to national security, according to a federal document.”

The above is not news, for the killer had already declared it on more than one occasion. Is it not a threat to the world a man that says he is the mastermind of the bombings of Havana hotels in 1997

or of the massacre of guerrillas in Venezuela, as he told in his book *Roads of the Warrior*? Is it not a threat a man who blows up a plane full of people?

It might seem strange that after so many years of terrorism on the part of Posada Carriles and his accomplices, the United States government makes that claim, and even stranger still is the silence of US media.

A letter written by the DHS' Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) obtained by *El Nuevo Herald* points out: "For his long record of criminal acts and violence that implicate innocent civilians, his release would represent a threat both for national security and for the nation".

According to the Miami daily, "the five-page letter was sent to Posada Carriles after the authorities released a brief communiqué on the decision to keep him indefinitely detained if a third country is not found for deportation."

Why is the United States government determined to ignore the Montreal Agreement that it has signed and that binds member nations to join "in the repression of illicit acts against the safety of civil aviation"? The Montreal Agreement, signed on September 23, 1971, establishes that "if for any reason a State is unable to extradite a person charged of such a crime, it is bound to try him or her for that action."

Likewise, according to the Agreement, the US government, instead of looking for a third country has the obligation to try Posada for the terrorist act against the Cubana airplane in Barbados as if it had been perpetrated on US territory.

By not extraditing Posada to Venezuela, the United States government assumes the responsibility of trying him for his crime.

Now in its letter the ICE accepts the crimes committed by Posada, including the bombing of the Cubana airplane in mid-air.

To justify Posada's indefinite detention, ICE lists the following facts:

- "The charges for his alleged role in the bombing of a Cuban airplane that caused the death of 73 passengers in 1976.
- "His arrest in Panama in 2000 in relation to an alleged plan to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro.
- "His admission of having organized acts of sabotage against tourist facilities in Havana in 1997.

- “His close links with anti Castro activists Santiago Álvarez and Osvaldo Mitat, charged with illegal possession of arms and explosives. On March 17, Judge James Cohn authorized the transportation of Posada to South Florida so that he could testify in the Álvarez and Mitat trial, set for May 8, 2006.”

Did the Department of Home Security ask themselves if the weapons transported by Santiago Álvarez and Osvaldo Mitat were the result of an order by Posada Carriles? Let me remind you that Santiago Álvarez and Osvaldo Mitat played a role in the assassination plot against Fidel in Panama, and later were aboard the *Santrina* in Posada’s illegal entry to the US. All their actions are common.

It is improbable that Posada would go to the trial to expose those links. He is the coward that does not show his face nor his hide, but others’, for money.

Eduardo Soto, Posada’s lawyer, said of the ICE letter that it was “a surreptitious maneuver.”

It is outrageous that it was not the US government the one to make public the ICE letter, and that apparently it was Posada’s lawyer who told *El Nuevo Herald* “that he had decided to announce it before requesting parole to a federal court for his client, who has been detained in El Paso, Texas, since May 17, 2005.”

If Washington claims that Posada Carriles is a threat to national security, it is the same for any country in the world, so deporting him to a third country would be like warning everyone that a terrorist will be loose on the streets.

The Bushes' Pandora's Box

On February 21, 2006, I interviewed Vice President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela José Vicente Rangel. At the Vice-presidential Office we talked about the extradition of international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles.

Once again one of the rooms that precede his office served as location for an interview. Several portraits of Bolívar and photos of Rangel with President Chávez are the announcement of a friendship and a commitment.

On what legal instruments did Venezuela based its request for Posada Carriles' extradition?

“It was based on principles of international law and the country's own legislation. That is a well founded request both in the political and the legal area, particularly in the legal area.

“You know perfectly well that this is a case that goes beyond the framework of the law. It is a case that is fundamental for the Bush administration. So Bush's law is applied as if it were international law, not even the US law, but the law of the Bush Clan, because Posada Carriles is so related to the Bush Clan —to the Bush Gang. Posada Carriles is the Bush family's terrorist. So there is a supranational protection in this case that characterizes the situation.

“There is not the slightest doubt, neither in Venezuela nor in the rest of the world, about the terrorist characteristics of Posada Carriles. If there is someone in the present world identified as a terrorist —a self-confessed, real terrorist— who has participated in thousands of

criminal acts, and who is typified as a terrorist, that person is Posada Carriles.

“But at the same time, Posada Carriles is a product of Bush’s terrorist policy in the United States, of the United States governments, and for that reason in this case it is very hard to handle that situation, because it is very clear that everything has to do with the law, with justice and with international rules.

“Venezuelan law is very clear, and so is Cuban law, but I insist, there is a *de facto* transnational—even supranational— law that has determined that extradition has not been granted, and that probably will not be granted.

“Deep down—as James Petras, a US analyst said— the empire and the Bush family are very much afraid of what Posada Carriles could say. Posada is a kind of Pandora’s Box that if opened could spew forth a lot of information not only about the US governments, but particularly about the direct implication of the Bush family, when Bush, Sr. was head of the CIA, then president, and now his son is president.”

The argument for not extraditing Posada Carriles by Judge William L. Abbott was that in Venezuela and Cuba he could be tortured. Based on that argument, when was torture practiced in Venezuela?

“There was torture. It even became institutionalized. It was a defining element of state policy during the government of “democracy” —we call it the IV Republic—, that is, the period from 1958 to 1998, the latter when Chávez became President. In those 40 years of bipartisan exercise of Venezuelan politics, torture was absolutely normal, it was a state policy.

“During President Chavez’s government torture has been totally eradicated. The judge’s argument is a sophism, because not only there is no torture, but now the US government defends and endorses torture. Prisoners at Guantánamo—which is Cuban territory usurped by the United States— are tortured by members of the US armed forces’ intelligence service.

“The argument of torture is totally unacceptable from any point of view, and is a manner of avoiding the extradition of the terrorist. I believe that the Posada case is emblematic because it is the most genuine expression of the US government’s double standards in

relation to the war on terrorism. The United States fights against one form of terrorism, not against terrorism. It uses terrorism in that war on terrorism, and that is how Posada Carriles becomes the symbol of that double standard, that hypocrisy.”

Why do you say ‘one form of terrorism’?

“Because the United States, for example, calls bin Laden a terrorist, and I believe that a man like Posada Carriles is more of a terrorist than bin Laden, not to mean that I am defending bin Laden. One must have a consistent position in the struggle against terrorism. You either condemn it or are part of it, there are no ambiguous policies and no middle ground. In my view, Posada Carriles is the most exact expression of state terrorism, the empire’s terrorism, the terrorism that the United States has practiced.

What happened with the compilation of the dossiers of Posada Carriles’ victims here in Venezuela —when he was known as ‘Commissioner Basilio’— that were going to be sent to the United States, specifically to the Attorney General?

“I have been working on that. Many interesting elements have been discovered in an investigation sponsored by the National Assembly about missing persons in the 1960s and 1970s. It should be pointed out that the practice of “missing” persons began in Venezuela, and not in the Southern Cone, as it was thought. It was in ‘democratic’ Venezuela, the one of the COPEI and Acción Democrática¹ governments. We have over a thousand cases under investigation and there is also what has been pointed out in relation to violation of human rights, missing persons and torture at the time that Posada Carriles was a commissioner at DISIP. Because there was a time when the previous governments left Intelligence to the Cuban followers of Batista, the ones from Miami. They became the top officials of Security and Intelligence in Venezuela and introduced a Cold War factor in those security agencies. There is a lot of information in relation to that, testimonials of many victims of Commissioner Basilio —Posada Carriles.

¹ Democratic Action (AD) is a Venezuelan social democratic political party established on 1941, Four presidents came from Acción Democrática between the 1960s and 1990s. By the end of the 1990s, however, the party’s credibility was almost nonexistent, mostly because of the corruption and poverty that Venezuelans experienced during the party’s time in power.

“There are so many episodes of torture... there are people who were lucky enough that their whereabouts were known, that they were abusing them, torturing them, and we were able to save their lives. That was a very somber and tortuous era, because the Venezuelan state practically delivered the State of the Law into the hands of those Batista and Miami Cubans, who in turn were the representatives of the empire and worked in the framework of the CIA and of other US intelligence and defense agencies.

“I believe that one of the most sordid pages of Posada Carriles’ actions were written here in Venezuela, and that explains the participation of Venezuelan Intelligence in his case, not only because of the bombing of the Cuban airplane, but for all his repressive acts that violate human rights that at present are obvious for the entire world. If in the Southern Cone, that is, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, repressors and torturers of that time are being investigated, tried and sentenced, in the case of Posada Carriles the same thing should happen.”

What became of the request by Venezuela that the case of Posada Carriles should be tried by a federal court? Have you had an answer on the matter?

“The steps that have been taken undoubtedly lead to impunity, letting the case die in domestic and international public opinion. That is, they have frozen it so that public opinion forgets about it. Thus it is important to keep denouncing those responsible. In my opinion the only one responsible, the absolute responsible is the President of the United States.”

Who is Joaquín Chaffardet, the “star witness”, as the press called him, presented at the last hearing at El Paso by Posada’s lawyers?

“He is a man that was linked to the most sordid police and repressive experiences in Venezuela. He played a role in that sinister period of actions by Cubans in Venezuela security. He is totally disqualified. He is an accomplice of Posada.”

What is to be done? Pressure from the public? What is the strategy of the Venezuelan government in that sense, and particularly, in the face of the United States’ double standard?

“Keep up the offensive. Never rest. Never give up. Have faith in world public opinion, have faith also in some democratic sectors of

US public opinion. We should have much faith with this case. I have seen many opinions by intellectuals, artists, political leaders who have a very clear position and that believe that the way the US government defends a terrorist at the same time that attacks other terrorists is despicable. I believe we should trust public opinion, both national and international. In that sense we must not lose heart. I believe that any effort is important. We must prevent the case from dying.”

Knowing the US government, can a man like Posada Carriles be a threat to the Bush administration?

“Yes, I believe so. That is the reason Bush is avoiding extradition, even deportation to a third country. Posada Carriles knows many things about the Clan, many things about the perversion and sordidness of US intelligence agencies. He knows many names; he has played a role in many important actions, in such a way that he is a basic part. That is why the Bush administration has defended him with tooth and nail, including in the judiciary.”

Next February 14 the Atlanta Court of Appeals will evaluate the decision by a three-judge panel that overturned the charges against the Cuban Five. You spoke of a double standard on the part of the United States. What is your opinion about the subterfuges used by the United States government in relation to these antiterrorists?

It is part of that arsenal of infamies, of lies, of manipulation of the truth characteristic of the Bush administration. I spoke about a double standard, but I think I was wrong, because it is a triple, quadruple, quintuple standard. That is, a multiplicity of discourses that they adapt for each circumstance, for each situation. One discourse or standard for Posada Carriles, another one for bin Laden, and one for the jails they have in Europe, another discourse for attacking the (Venezuelan) government of being authoritarian, a standard, for example, for the five Cuban comrades who have been imprisoned precisely for fighting terrorism.

“That is part of the characteristics of that US power, specially that Bushist power, which is a specificity of US power.”

As an expert on International Law, what do you think can be expected of the Appeals Court in Atlanta?

“I am pessimistic in relation to court decisions in the United States, because they are very much influenced by the executive branch, so

I am not very hopeful. However, in life one must keep some faith. At the bottom of the soul. I will wait for the decision. I don't believe things are going to change."

And which should be the outcome?

"Set them free. Return them to their country. There is no other way out."

There has been an increase of US aggressions against Venezuela, but not of Venezuelan opposition. What is the reason?

"The opposition does not count any more. The Venezuelan opposition is Bush. It is very clear to me. And the US latest attitudes, when top officials like Rumsfeld or Negroponte attack Chávez and the national government, it is not anymore a specific task of the spokespersons of the State Department, but of the *capos* of the empire.

"It is a sign of the desperation of the Bush administration, because at this moment the sky is falling down on them, all the theory that they set up about a victorious end, all, that stupidity, has gone up in smoke. And in the end the peoples are advancing with a speed that terrifies them. They talk of the left, of the victories of the left. No, it is not the victory of the left in Latin America, but the victory of the peoples that are advancing. It is unstoppable: Evo Morales' victory in Bolivia, when polls predicted his defeat; the result of the Costa Rican elections. In the end, that is a clash between those who are in favor of free trade and those who are not. Thus we witness Preval's victory in Haiti; that is, defeat a president, kidnap him, then summon to elections and a man linked to President Aristide won. Those are facts that are beyond the empire's control.

"It is the same with the consolidation of the Cuban revolutionary process, the consolidation of the Venezuelan revolutionary process. Facts that drive the empire crazy, an empire that due to its characteristics is overbearing, arrogant; they cannot understand a social, political and economic phenomenon that is growing in their former backyard, a backyard they used to dominate and that they are not able to dominate at present. The only manner they can face it is with threats, arrogance, disdain, and with concrete actions, like they already did here on April 11 with a military coup in Caracas, then when they promoted and gave precise instructions for the 2002-2003 oil coup. But all those policies backfired and the fact drives

them mad. So now they have chosen President Chávez as a scape-goat; but it is not only Chávez, it is Kirchner, it is Lula, it is Tabaré, Evo Morales, Preval, Otón Solís in Costa Rica. Those are lines that disagree with the empire one way or another, each of them according to his characteristics and his particularities.”

The US government is always condemning countries for one reason or another. Could Venezuela request the condemnation of the United States at an international organization such as the UN for the US amoral position in relation to Posada Carriles’ extradition?

“We have no plans in that sense in the near future, but it could happen. We are going to wait for their decision. In any case, one of the characteristics of President Chávez and his government is that we never are on the defensive. And they know that, and that is the reason for their concern and their restlessness with the President. We will not be intimidated; we will not back down, but will go ever forward, because we believe that we are right, and at any moment we can take our point of view on this issue to the OAS or the UN, or to any international organization, but particularly before the court of the peoples and international public opinion.

Why do you say that you are not on the defensive?

Some countries adopt a defensive position when the giant of the North stirs or sneezes. We don’t. We give him a handkerchief so it can wipe his nose.”

Has it worked?

“Yes, up to now it has. I believe they respect us.”

Lastly, on February 4 President Chávez summoned to the “2nd Battle of Santa Inés.”² Is the country already in an electoral process, or is it the strategy for that electoral process?

Hypocrites will say that we are not in an electoral process, but the electoral process was decreed by the opposition a long time ago. The opposition has been discussing for a long time about a

² On August 2004, in a show of trust in the Venezuelan people, President Hugo Chávez submitted to a referendum that could have revoked his presidency. His campaign in preparation for the referendum was dubbed by him the “Battle of Santa Inés”. Subsequently he ran for reelection on December 2006, and called his campaign the “2nd. Battle of Santa Inés”. He won both elections.

presidential candidate. For some time Julio Borges, the head of a party called Justice First, has been campaigning around the country, with little success, with an electoral message; Teodoro Petkoff has been playing 'she loves me, she loves me not' with his candidacy, and that is electoral, And we are also in an electoral mode, Why not?

"We do it when we say what the government is doing, organizing the people, warning about the imperialist threat, but the electoral process in itself has not begun in Venezuela, although in a certain way it has, because the country also functions electorally. We want the participation of the largest number of opposition candidates. Let there be a hundred candidacies —that is democracy. But we hope there is not a repetition of December 4, when at the last moment they decided to withdraw from the parliamentary elections."

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President.

In Your Hands

Auditorium: A Failed Assassination is one of many stories of how US sponsored terrorism against Cuba is never found guilty in court. It is the truth from up close and told unpretentiously in order to present memory with an everlasting dossier. These pages are in your hand so that a reality that has remained alive for 47 years is not forgotten. This is the same number of years that have permitted the construction of a social project witnessed by all, standing up to the sword that in the hands of traitors and enemies has attempted to deal a blow in the back of a people that has mourned pains and has applauded victories such as the denunciation made by Fidel about Posada Carriles' presence in Panama, which prevented the assassination.

I have already said that readers would not find here a book of joys, but the reason for so much sadness: terrorism.

From this moment on the book rests in your hands, so denunciation belongs to all who choose peace, wherever they are.

Please write me your valuable comments at ideulofeu@yahoo.es so that *Auditorium: A Failed Assassination* finally becomes a closed case.

I began to write the book in 2001. I dedicated it minutes, hours, nights, weekends, and I still do. But events every day run slower and justice is still behind bars.

Denunciation must be timely and in the voice of all become a shout with an endless echo.

Four years ago I was on the coast of Barbados, just at the site where parts of bodies and of the Cubana plane wreckage, caused

by the bomb that Posada Carriles had detonated in mid flight, had washed ashore. Twenty five years had gone by and the grave of water where death lies seemed to be in mourning. At that part of the coast there are few boats and the beach never again was the one that many preferred. Wendy is one of numerous surfers that never returned there. She was 16 when she saw the plane plunge into the sea. At 38, she describes it as if it were falling again before her eyes.

We should not allow life to grow with the trauma of death or be cut short by men of evil.

The author