

Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles' CIA links 40 years ago in South Florida

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Posada's CIA ties uncovered in papers

Details have emerged about Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles' CIA links 40 years ago in South Florida. One revelation: his tie to the agency's Miami bureau.

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Nearly four years after the failed CIA-backed Bay of Pigs invasion, Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles continued to work for the spy agency, according to CIA files released to The Miami Herald.

His job: "Training Branch Instructor" for its Miami station, which then was responsible for intelligence-gathering missions into Cuba. He was part of the covert JMWAVE — the code name for the CIA Miami bureau, which at the time operated within the University of Miami.

His tenure: March 26, 1965, to July 11, 1967.

The revelation of Posada's ties to the CIA's operations in Miami was contained in documents requested by The Miami Herald as part of a Freedom of Information Act request.

Although some of Posada's CIA links were known previously, the CIA files released to the newspaper this month add detail about the Cuban militant's connections to America's storied and controversial spy agency.

The information comes at a time that Posada, currently detained in El Paso, Texas, is seeking approval of his U.S. citizenship application on the ground that he served the CIA and the U.S. military.

Posada, 78, has been held since immigration agents took him into custody in Miami last year after his surreptitious entry into the United States from Mexico. Posada was detained just hours after holding an "invitation-only" press conference at a West Miami-Dade County warehouse.

Posada has been denied asylum, although an immigration judge in El Paso prohibited the government from deporting him to Cuba or Venezuela.

Posada has been accused of blowing up a Cuban airliner in the Caribbean in 1976, bombing hotels in Cuba in 1997 and 1998, and conspiring to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro in Panama in 2000. He has denied all of the allegations.

POSADA'S CLAIM

Posada's lawyer, Eduardo Soto, told The Miami Herald on Friday that the CIA documents could help his client gain freedom because they confirm that he was a soldier and employee of the U.S. government for years.

"I believe it fortifies in some way his claim that he was not only a soldier of this country on the armed services, but served as an employee for the CIA," Soto said. "That bodes well with respect to our request that he be placed at liberty."

Posada could be freed after a hearing July 6 in El Paso, although it's unlikely, since immigration officials are adamant about keeping him locked up.

Soto said skills Posada developed while working for JMWAVE were later put to use to advance U.S. interests in Central America in the 1980s.

In 1985, after Posada fled a Venezuelan jail where he was held in connection with the 1976 airliner attack, he turned up in El Salvador, working for a covert arms-resupply network for the Nicaraguan contras overseen by then National Security Council staff member Oliver North.

Whether the newly released papers will help or hinder Posada in his quest for citizenship and freedom was unclear.

Some of the documents contain references to potentially derogatory information suggesting that the CIA severed its relationship with Posada because of his alleged association with a known mobster and suspicions that his brother had links to Cuban intelligence.

Soto said he did not believe that those references would affect his client's case. Soto denied that Posada had a relationship with a gangster or that his CIA assignments were compromised by his brother.

REQUEST DENIED

One document shows that Posada's request for a military reserve commission was denied in 1966. The document, dated April 5, 1972, said Army records showed that Posada's application for the commission was "disapproved" in September 1966 after an Army Intelligence Command background investigation.

Although the reasons for the denial were contained in the original document, the copy given to The Miami Herald did not include them.

Another document, undated but marked "SECRET" and titled Updated Biographic Data, said Posada's "termination" as a JMWAVE "CI," or confidential informant, came on July 11, 1967.

At the bottom of the document are handwritten notes listing references to Posada's contacts with his brother Roberto and the reputed gangster — Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal. Another document says Posada believes that his other brother, Raul, is an engineer who "works for the Cuban government."

The handwritten note about Roberto says "suspect" and "Cuban I.S.," possibly a reference

to intelligence service.

Posada, in an interview in detention in El Paso last year, said he had "no relation" to Rosenthal but would not elaborate and declined to discuss family connections in Cuba.

Many of the documents given to The Miami Herald were previously released by the CIA to the National Archives. Some are also available in the collection of the National Security Archive, a nongovernmental research institute and library at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Information in the documents was also shared with investigators from the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which in the 1970s reinvestigated President Kennedy's 1963 assassination. The committee probed whether organized crime, Cuban exiles or exile groups conspired to kill Kennedy.

The committee concluded that exile groups were not involved in an assassination conspiracy, but did not rule out the possible role of individual exiles.

The documents released did not show any connection between Posada and the assassination. Posada told The Miami Herald in El Paso last year that he was in Georgia on the day Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

None of the documents contained specific details about Posada's duties for JMWAVE.

Former Miami Herald Latin America editor Don Bohning, who researched JMWAVE for his recent book, *The Castro Obsession*, said JMWAVE directed exile attacks in Cuba until 1963 and then staged covert intelligence-gathering missions until it was deactivated in early 1968.

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