

# Documents: CIA warned of plane bomb plot

The Miami Herald  
Oct. 10, 2006

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico** - An anti-Castro militant now in a Texas jail warned the CIA months before the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that fellow exiles were planning such an attack, according to a newly released U.S. government document.

The document shows that Luis Posada Carriles - who had worked for the CIA but was cut off by the agency earlier that year - was secretly telling the CIA that his fellow far-right Cuban exiles opposed to Fidel Castro's communist government were plotting to bring down a commercial jet.

The document does not say what the CIA did with Posada's tip. A CIA spokesman said he had no comment on Monday, a federal holiday.

The CIA had extensive contacts with anti-Castro militants and trained some of them, but has denied involvement in the bombing.

The documents were posted online Thursday by the National Security Archive, an independent research institute at George Washington University that seeks to declassify government files through the Freedom of Information Act.

The Cubana Airlines plane, on a flight from Venezuela to Cuba, blew up shortly after taking off from a stopover in Barbados on Oct. 6, 1976, killing all 73 aboard, including Cuba's Olympic fencing team.

The bombing remains an open wound in Cuba. Weeping relatives of the victims met in a Havana cemetery on Friday, the 30th anniversary of the bombing. They demanded that Posada - who is now 78 and in a Texas detention center on an immigration violation - be put on trial.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is seeking the extradition of Posada, a naturalized Venezuelan who served as the country's counterintelligence chief. He accuses the U.S. government of protecting a terrorist.

The National Security Archive's Peter Kornbluh urged the U.S. government to tell everything it knows about Posada.

"Now is the time for the government to come clean on Posada's covert past and his involvement in international terrorism," Kornbluh said. "His victims, the public, and the courts have a right to know."

Separating deception from truth in the intelligence world is notoriously difficult, and the newly released documents contain mixed messages about Posada. Much remains murky.

In a report dated a month after the bombing, then FBI Director Clarence Kelly told Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that a confidential FBI source ascertained the bombing had been planned in Caracas by Posada, Venezuelan intelligence agency official Ricardo Morales Navarrete and Cuban exile Frank Castro, who is not related to the Cuban leader.

Two Venezuelan employees of Posada's private security agency were arrested in Trinidad the day after the bombing, and one of them - who said he had worked for the CIA - admitted the two had planted the bomb, documents posted by the National Security Archive show.

Posada trained with the CIA for the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and served in the U.S. Army in the early 1960s. In 1965, he allegedly plotted to overthrow the Guatemalan government and blow up a Soviet or Cuban freighter in Mexico, according to the FBI. In 1967, he moved to Venezuela, eventually leading its counterintelligence agency, and was running his own security firm in the mid-1970s.

In 1973, Posada was investigated by the CIA for allegedly smuggling cocaine, but was cleared after he convinced interrogators he was "guilty of only having the

wrong kind of friends," a declassified document says. The same document says the CIA "formally terminated" its relationship with him on Feb. 13, 1976.

Yet Posada still contacted the agency.

"After 2/76 contacts with (deleted by censors) were at Posada's own initiative to volunteer information in exchange for assistance U.S. visa for self and family," said the document, an annotated list of still-secret records on Posada's CIA career that was marked "sanitized."

It tells how Posada contacted the CIA in February 1976 to describe an assassination plot by Orlando Bosch and Frank Castro, two fellow right-wing Cuban exiles, against leftist Andres Pascal Allende, the nephew of slain Chilean President Salvador Allende. Posada worried that his allies would discover he was giving up their secrets.

"Posada concerned that Bosch will blame Posada for leak of plans," the report says. Andres Allende was not assassinated, and it is unclear whether the Cuban exiles ever made an attempt on his life.

Then, four months later, Posada came back to tell of a sinister plot to blow up an airliner.

On June 22, 1976, "Posada again contacts (deleted by censor) repled info concerning possible exile plans to blow up Cubana Airliner leaving Panama and requested visa assistance," read the document, filled with typographical errors.

Shortly after, a bomb aboard a Cubana Airlines plane leaving Panama failed to detonate, and the following month, a bomb in a suitcase exploded before being loaded onto a Cubana plane leaving Jamaica, according to a confidential State Department memo previously posted by the National Security Archive.

The day after the Cubana Airlines flight was bombed near Barbados, the CIA tried unsuccessfully to contact Posada, according to the annotated list. Five days later, Posada was arrested in Venezuela. He denied involvement in the bombing and escaped from prison in 1985 before a civilian trial was completed.

Allegations that he masterminded mass murder did not keep U.S. covert operatives from hiring Posada again. Within months, he was delivering weapons to Nicaraguan Contra rebels in an illegal Reagan administration operation. Posada also acknowledged, and then denied, a role in Havana hotel bombings in 1997 that killed a tourist.

And in 2000, Posada was arrested for allegedly plotting to assassinate Castro during a summit in Panama. He was pardoned in 2004 by then Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso.

Posada was detained in Florida in May 2005 for entering the United States illegally. A U.S. immigration judge has ruled that he cannot be sent to Cuba or Venezuela, citing fears that he would be tortured.