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Washington Post Foreign Service

CARACAS, Venezuela, Oct. 24—A Venezuelan being held on suspicion of involvement in the crash of a Cuban airlines plane that killed 73 persons earlier this month has been in frequent contact with an FBI agent attached to the U.S. embassy here, it has been learned.

The FBI agent, Joe Leo, has also been in contact with at least one of two Cuban exiles being held in connection with the crash.

The contacts, confirmed by the U.S. embassy here, appear to raise questions about the statement by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger on Oct. 15 that "no one in contact with the American government has had anything to do" with the sabotage of the plane.

Leo, an embassy spokesman confirmed, knows two of the four men jailed as suspects in the firebombing that led to the crash off Barbados Oct. 6. In addition, his name and telephone number were found in the personal effects of a third suspect.

[A State Department spokesman in Washington said Sunday that Kissinger would have no comment.]

Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro has accused the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency of participation in the firebombing of the airplane and a series of other terrorist actions against Cuba. Following the crash he announced cancellation of the three-year-old U.S.-Cuban treaty to prevent hijacking.

In response to Castro's charges, Kissinger said in Boston on Oct. 15: "I can state categorically that no official of the U.S. government, no one paid by the American government, no one in contact with the American government has had anything to do" with the airplane sabotage.

Leo's most recent contact with any of the suspects, the embassy said, was with Hernan Ricardo, 25, a Venezuelan held in Trinidad, who reportedly has confessed to placing the bomb aboard the aircraft. Another Venezuelan is being held with Ricardo in Trinidad, and two Cuban exiles are being detained here in connection with the case.

Leo twice helped Ricardo to get a visa, the embassy said. In 1974, Leo expedited a visa for the child of a member of the Venezuelan security police, known as Disip, at Ricardo's request. This year, Leo helped Ricardo obtain a one-year U.S. business visa for a trip to Puerto Rico on assignment as a photographer from Vision magazine, the spokesman said. Vision magazine denied any association with Ricardo.

Leo also had contact with Luis Posada, the Cuban refugee leader held in Caracas.

Posada said Friday that Ricardo worked for his private detective

agency. Leo, according to the embassy spokesman, maintained "a casual acquaintance with Luis Posada when Posada was a Disip official . . . He would see him whenever he went over there—not whenever, but on occasion." Leo has been legal attache at the embassy since 1970, and Posada was one of the five top men in Disip between 1971 and 1973.

The embassy spokesman said he had no explanation for why Leo's name and telephone number appeared in the appointment book of a third suspect, Freddy Lugo, 31, who is being held with Ricardo in Trinidad. Leo has had no personal contact with Lugo, the spokesman said.

The fourth man being held, Orlando Bosch, spoke to reporters at some length on arriving with Posada for interrogation by a judge. Bosch, also a Cuban exile, has been convicted in Miami of terrorist activities.

The United States has asked Venezuela to return Bosch for questioning in the assassination Sept. 21 in Washington of Chilean exile Orlando Letelier.

Bosch, who has been charged at various times with carrying false Chilean, Dominican and Costa Rican passports, said "I always travel with a false passport for security reasons."

Bosch is leader of the United Revolutionary Organizations Command, a Miami-based group opposing the Cuban governments.

Posada and Bosch said they did not know why they had been arrested, and said they were innocent. Posada added "I neither approve nor condemn" the airliner firebombing.

A five-nation diplomatic conference taking place about 40 yards from Ricardo's cell in police headquarters in Trinidad broke up after two days of which country will prosecute Ricardo and Lugo or on what charges.

Barbados Prime Minister Tom Adams said in a nationwide broadcast that there was not yet enough evidence to convict Ricardo and Lugo.

Although the plane crash occurred off Barbados, it was outside that country's three-mile territorial limit. Trinidadian officials have said that their small security forces are not equipped to handle the case, while Guyana and Cuba, whose citizens died in the crash, have no jurisdiction.

It is unofficially expected that the two suspects will be returned to Venezuela for trial.

Suspects in Crash Of Cuban Airliner Knew FBI Agent

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