

# Canadian Says U.S. Paid Him \$5,000 to Infect Cuban Poultry

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NEW YORK, March 20—A Canadian agricultural technician working in Cuba says he was paid \$5,000 by an American intelligence agent in 1962 to infect Cuban turkeys with a fatal disease.

The Canadian, said in an interview that more than 8,000 turkeys on a Cuban state farm subsequently died, but not because he infected them with the Newcastle disease virus he claims he received in Canada from a military intelligence operative.

He said that he destroyed the virus before leaving Canada for Cuba in late spring, 1962, and later had "one hell of a good time" with the money.

The major details of the Canadian's story have been confirmed by sources within and outside the American intelligence community.

During the summer of 1962, the technician said, about 8,000 turkeys at the Cuban farm died of neglect or other causes unrelated to the virus scheme. "Either the Cubans wouldn't work, or they were off reading some tract by Mao Tse-tung," he said. The farm, known as PR-1, was in the Pinar del Rio Province of western Cuba. According to U.S. intelligence reports, the Cubans—and some Americans—believe the turkeys died as the result of espionage.

The Canadian was working as an adviser to the Cuban government and visited farms, including PR-1, in the course of his duties. He said he told the American agent who approached him that, based on his observations, the turkeys were going to die anyway. But the agent continued to press him, he said, and he finally said he would carry out the operation. "If they were stupid enough to pay me \$5,000 to kill birds that were as good as dead already, I figured they'd just give the money to someone else," he said.

The Cubans were pushing turkey production in 1962 because of an urgent need to quickly increase their meat supply, which had been cut sharply by the American trade embargo and a deteriorating production system brought about by collectivization of agriculture.

Newcastle disease is a viral illness that affects the respiratory organs of poultry, particularly young chickens, ducks and turkeys. There are vaccines, but once the poultry is infected there is no effective treatment, and all

infected birds and those they come in contact with must be destroyed.

The technician, who asked that his name be withheld, said he was approached in Miami by a man he knew as "Ron" and who identified himself with credentials as being from "American intelligence."

A source within the Defense Intelligence Agency confirmed that "Ron" worked for the DIA at that time, and then said: "If you're going to tell me what I think you're going to tell me, I don't want to hear it." He refused to comment further.

At the Miami meeting, the Canadian said, he was told that if he was interested he would be contacted again in Toronto, where he lived.

The Canadian told "Ron" that in his opinion infecting the turkeys would be a waste of time because the birds were going to die anyway. But "Ron" told him that the United States couldn't wait because it had received information that the Cubans were planning to introduce hoof-and-mouth disease into the United States he said. The DIA source confirmed that officials were concerned over reports that Cuba was contemplating the possibility of germ warfare.

Two months ago, after Newsday reported that the Central Intelligence Agency gave tacit approval to the introduction of African swine fever in Cuba in 1971, columnist Jack Anderson reported that the United States had intelligence reports at the time of the poultry plot indicating that a Cuban official—Agricultural Minister Antonio Nunez Jimenez—proposed infecting U.S. cattle with hoof-and-mouth disease. Cattle, once infected, have to be destroyed to prevent spread of the disease. According to intelligence reports, Nunez Jimenez later cited what he believed to be U.S. turkeys in Pinar del Rio as a reason involvement in the death of Cuban to retaliate with the hoof-and-mouth disease plot.

According to the Canadian's account, he was contacted in Toronto in May, 1962, and asked to go to Ottawa. In Ottawa, he met with "Ron" and agreed to undertake the mission. The next day he was paid \$5,000 in \$50 and \$100 bills and was given a container of virus that he incinerated before leaving for Havana. He arrived there aboard a Canadian flight in June, 1962.

The Canadian said he spent the money in Miami and New Orleans. He was later contacted by "Ron" and told that he had done a good job and was wanted for another mission. He refused.