

# Black-Edged Legend Is Ended In a Vulgar Miami Bar Brawl

12/6/83  
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MIAMI—Ricardo Morales departed life as he had lived it, violently and under a cloak of so much intrigue that no one can be sure what happened.

As his friends and enemies tell it, however, one thing is certain: the .32-caliber bullet that penetrated the Cuban exile's head from behind eliminated a man who had made himself into a black-edged legend to be told and cherished throughout Miami, Latin America and, perhaps, Langley, Va.

After a month of investigation, the Dade County Public Safety Department has concluded that the spy, counterspy, mercenary, confessed murderer, bomber, informer, dope dealer and operator extraordinary was shot in a vulgar bar brawl, enraged because he thought someone had called him a *maricon*, or homosexual.

Morales allegedly was killed just before midnight Dec. 20 while reaching for the .38 strapped to his ankle in what Detective Steve Roadruck concluded was justifiable homicide for which no one should be charged.

"If you believe that, I've got a piece of expressway I'll sell you cheap," said one of Morales' attorneys, John Komorowski. "I'm convinced that somebody needed Morales dead and just executed him. There's no question about it; it was a set up. Who? God only knows. It could have been the Cubans, the anti-Castro Cubans, the druggers, the CIA, anybody."

In his 43 years, Morales had been involved with all of them, and more, in and out of the nether world of Miami. Miami is a place where simple explanations seldom suffice. It is where cocaine deals make people suddenly rich, occult and dead. It is where dissidents from a dozen Latin and Caribbean countries plot revolutions. It is a city so used to intrigue that a magazine for Latin visitors lists the CIA local phone number along with those of hotels and

all-night pharmacies.

So from Morales' family and friends, some of whom were also his enemies at one time or another, have come several theories about why he might have been shot and by whom. None is provable, but they give an idea of how Morales lived and maybe how he died.

"Monkey" Morales, as the Miami press called him, had claimed that he helped plan and carry out the 1976 bombing of a Cubana airliner in which 73 persons died near Barbados. Morales claimed to friends that the C4 plastique explosive used to blow up the plane came from a storeroom of DISIP, the Venezuelan intelligence service in which Morales was then a high officer, and a then-DISIP director, Orlando Garcia, knew about the plot.

Morales explained that most of those aboard, some listed as the Cuban fencing team, were actually important regional operatives of the DGI, the Cuban version of the CIA.

Morales also was the chief informer for Miami police last year in an elaborate drug investigation called "Operation Tick-Talks" because of a bug hidden behind a clock in a suspect's home. The case was eventually thrown out of court because a judge ruled that Morales lacked credibility, but not before Rafael Villaverde and his brother Raul were charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine.

Friends say Morales had long wanted to nail Rafael Villaverde, a fellow Cuban. Villaverde, a Bay of Pigs veteran, had been a CIA operative in Miami during the agency's Cuban destabilization campaign in the early 1960s. Morales' friends say they did not know why Morales had it in for him. But Morales also was a CIA operative in the anti-Cuban campaign and a friend of former CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson.

As a young CIA officer, Wilson had participated in the anti-Cuba campaign for which Miami was the chief launching pad. Anti-Cuban campaign veterans Rafael and Raul Villaverde have said they met Wilson in Geneva in September, 1976, because they thought Wilson was recruiting them for a CIA plan to kill an international terrorist called Carlos the Jackal. But by then Wilson was working for Col. Muammar Qaddafi of Libya. According to U.S. investigators, he was proposing instead a plot to kill a Libyan dissident.

The Villaverdes went to U.S. authorities with the proposal. Their denunciation became part of an investigation that has landed Wilson in jail.

Morales was killed in a bar called Cherries in Key Biscayne, the plush island off Miami where Richard M. Nixon once had a home. After an early evening of drinks in the section called Little Havana, he had gone there in his red Cadillac with Nancy Cid Lamazares and Juan Fernandez.

Lamazares was an old friend, the widow of German Lamazares, a Cuban exile murdered in 1973. Mo-

rales was the chief informer who led to the indictment of Armando Elidio Ruiz on charges that he killed Lamazares. Morales was also the man, by his account in a later court deposition, who killed Ruiz with an automatic pistol after Ruiz was acquitted and showed up on Morales' front porch one night.

A police investigation showed it was a customer in Cherries who shot Morales, Detective Roadruck said.

Lt. Raul Diaz of the Dade County Public Safety Department, who received information and terrorist lore from Morales for a decade, said any number of people in Miami—terrorists, drug dealers and spies from various nations—had reasons to kill him. In addition to admitting blowing up the Cuban plane, Morales said he had built and planted bombs for anti-Castro activists in Miami, while simultaneously working as an informer for the FBI.

Diaz tells of accepting an invitation from Morales to a Christmas party in 1975. As guests were milling about with drinks, Morales re-

minded Diaz of a song that went, "The Condor Is Passing." Condor was the name of an anti-Castro terrorist Diaz was then seeking, and he wondered vainly what Morales was talking about.

Some time later, Morales, at the time with Venezuelan intelligence, called and suggested Diaz compare certain sets of fingerprints. The prints matched and Diaz had his case against the Condor.

But not such a good one, it turned out. At the same time he was informing to Diaz and the FBI, Morales had warned the Condor to flee. Only when Diaz saw the Condor's photograph, he recalled, did he realize that the suspect had also been a guest at the Christmas party where Morales made his jokes.

Diaz is under investigation by the FBI and the Dade internal unit for the Condor incident as well as other allegations. Once a star investigator dealing with international terrorism and high-stakes drug cases, he is now back in uniform on airport patrol.

"I would gladly give back all the things I learned from Ricardo Morales for a little peace of mind," he said in an interview.

Morales, an anti-Castro idealist when he fled Cuba in 1960 and signed on with the CIA, returned disillusioned from a stint in the Congo in 1963-64 during which, he later said, he killed hundreds of Africans as a CIA-sponsored mercenary. The experience left him bitter and soulless, friends recalled, but helped make him an extraordinarily well-trained and experienced operative.

His service with DISIP in Caracas included such assignments as tailing Carlos the terrorist and keeping track of Philip Agee, the CIA critic, according to telephone calls he made to Diaz from spots around the globe. But it also included long afternoons of drinking.

On his return to Miami, Morales sank into the drug and information trade, stepping down professionally, drinking more heavily and taking less care, according to acquaintances. He had become a heavy user of cocaine and quaaludes, and Diaz recalled seeing an entry in Morales' diary last year in which he talked of "little green men."

"I told him last summer," Diaz recalled, " 'You're going to get yourself killed in a goddam bar fight.' "