

U.S. Informant Linked to

By John Cummings

Ricardo Morales, a Cuban exile with long and close ties to the FBI and the CIA as well as the underworld, was named in court yesterday in Miami as the man who supplied the explosives that destroyed a Cuban airliner and killed 73 persons in 1976, after the airliner had taken off from Barbados.

Attorney Douglas Williams told Circuit Judge Gerald Kogan that Morales—who has been a key informant for virtual-

ly every federal agency in South Florida and is an admitted major narcotics trafficker—made the admission under oath in a deposition taken by Williams earlier this month. Williams is representing one of the defendants in a state narcotics trial in Miami, in which Morales is the major prosecution witness and some prominent Cuban exiles are defendants.

The disclosure is expected to send shock waves through the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communi-

ties, which had denied complicity in the bombing. The FBI concedes that Morales, at the time of the bombing, was a paid informant of the bureau. And intelligence sources said Morales had worked at least until the late 1960s as a contract agent for the CIA and—at the time of the explosion—had just been hired to work for the Venezuelan secret police, known as DISIP.

The explosion killed 73 persons, including all the members of the Cuban

Jet Crash

national fencing team, which was returning from a match in Venezuela. A U.S. intelligence source said at the time that a number of top Cuban intelligence officials, stationed throughout South America, were also aboard, bound for a meeting in Havana. President Fidel Castro, charging direct CIA involvement in the bombing, threatened to retaliate by abrogating a just-concluded treaty with the United States on the extradition of

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airline hijackers from Cuba. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger denied that the CIA—which was then headed by George Bush—was involved.

Williams said yesterday only that Morales had testified to him and a state prosecutor that he considered the Cubana de Aviacion airliner "a Communist air force plane . . . and [that] he supplied the explosives."

But Morales also is known to have told Williams that he was the "control" for at least one of the men who planted the bomb aboard the airliner. The plane exploded and crashed into the sea shortly after take-off from Barbados Seawall Airport on Oct. 6, 1976.

The man Morales is said to have had under his control was Hernan Ricardo Lozano, who, along with a second man, Fernando Lugo, was arrested in Trinidad the day after the bombing. What happened to the pair could not be immediately learned. Authorities said the two had boarded the Cubana plane originally in Trinidad, placed the bomb, left the plane in Barbados and then flown back to Trinidad, where they placed a "coded" call to Caracas, the Venezuelan capital.

At the time, it was believed that the call went to Luis Posada Carillos, then a member of DISIP and a close friend and a self-described "student" of Morales. Venezuelan police said a raid on a private detective agency run by Posada uncovered what was described as "detailed intelligence" on the location and security of Cuban embassies and airline offices in several countries. One paragraph in the report spoke of the weekly flight by Cubana to Barbados, Jamaica and Havana.

Morales, who worked for Cuban army intelligence at the time of his defection to the United States in 1960 and has himself survived at least one assassination attempt by bomb in Miami, is a recognized master of double-dealing. A week after the plane went down, Morales arranged for the arrest in Venezuela of Orlando Bosch, a known anti-Castro terrorist, as the mastermind of the Cubana bombing. Morales then called a Miami radio station and, according to the FBI, told it that an FBI informant was involved in the bombing. His motive for, in effect, pointing the finger at himself is not known.

In 1968, Morales had been the key government witness in the federal trial in Miami of Bosch, a former pediatrician with ties to international right-wing terrorist organizations. Bosch was convicted and given a 10-year sentence for attempting to blow up a ship in Miami with bombs the FBI had provided Morales to give Bosch. After serving four years of that sentence, Bosch was released on parole.

Morales, now 42, once was asked why he so often appeared to walk along a precipice and how he had managed to stay alive so long. "I don't play to win or lose," Morales said. "I just play to stay in the game."