

U.S. SENTENCES 'TIGER' OF CUBA

Masferrer Gets Four Years for Plot

By THEODORE A. EDIGER

MIAMI, Fla. (AP) — Rolando Masferrer, the dreaded "Tiger" of pre-Castro Cuba, was sentenced to four years in prison Wednesday in connection with a priest's plot to overthrow Haiti's government with a ragtag volunteer army.

Five members of Masferrer's invasion force were given lesser sentences by U.S. District Judge Ted Cabot.

Defense attorneys said all six defendants would appeal.

The defendants—three Cuban exiles, two Haitian exiles and one American—were among 73 men in battle dress nabbed by U.S. agents at a Florida Keys hide-out Jan. 2, 1967. The tiny army, witnesses said in a trial before Judge Cabot last November, was ready to shove off by boat to invade Haiti in order to establish a base to proceed against Fidel Castro.

Masferrer, a senator in pre-Castro Cuba, received three years on a charge of conspiring to invade Haiti and another year on a count of conspiring to export arms to Haiti.

FREE ON BOND

The 50-year-old exile, who had been free on \$2,500 recognizance bond, was taken into custody with appeal bond set at \$6,000.

Masferrer commanded a private army of some 1,500 persons during the regime of dictator Fulgencio Batista. The dreaded force, called "Los Tigres"—The Tigers—moved against pro-Castro elements. When Batista fell in 1959, Masferrer fled into exile.

Martin Casey, 29-year-old merchant seaman from Miami,

was sentenced to nine months on each count with the sentences to run at the same time. Casey's appeal bond was set at \$1,000.

The Rev. Jean Baptiste Georges, Roman Catholic priest and former Haitian Cabinet member who conceived the plot, received a 60-day jail term and suspended prison sentences of two years on each count. He was placed on three years probation. According to the alleged plot, Father Georges was to have been made Haitian president replacing Francois Duvalier.

Defense attorney Gino Negretti told the court: "All he did was try to free the Haitian people from one of the worst tyrannies in history."

NO QUESTION

Judge Cabot replied: "His sincerity is not in question, but this

is the second time he has been charged with this crime." In 1964, charges against Father Georges were dismissed.

Cuban exiles Antonio Rojas and Julio Aton Constanzo and Haitian exile Rene Leon, a former Army colonel and the father of seven living in Elmhurst, N.Y., were given 60 day jail sentences, one year suspended prison sentences, and two years probation.

Negretti moved unsuccessfully for a directed verdict of acquittal despite the jury conviction. He argued that an Oct. 3, 1962, joint resolution of Congress expressing support for freeing of Cuba from Communism superseded the statutes under which the defendants were convicted.

Judge Cabot ruled the resolution was an expression of policy rather than a law.

The six defendants, sentenced one by one, stood silent as they heard their fate.