

'Christ's Army' Eyes 'Crusade' Against Castro

MIAMI (AP)—Christ's Army, a little-publicized cloak-and-dagger-minded band of Cuban exiles, has ordered military training for its members to prepare for a "crusade" against the Fidel Castro regime.

"This is the ninth Christian crusade in the world to fight against the enemies of God," said Felix Barrios, commander of the group. The first eight have been recorded by historians as Middle Ages Christian military expeditions or "Holy wars" to recover the Holy land.

Christ's Army will start training next Sunday at a secret site, Barrios said.

MEMBERS TOOK oaths last week to pursue the crusade "to death or victory" and not to disclose secrets of their military plans.

In Cuba, said the 45-year-old one-time Castro warrior who turned against his bearded leader on the communism issue, "Satan rules today through diabolical sects which deny Christ and God."

The objective of the crusade, said Barrios, "is to liberate Cuba and then install a Christian government." He added, "We will work with the anti-Castro underground."

BARRIOS SAID he sneaked into Cuba last year and set up connections with anti-Castroites in four provinces.

More recently, he said, his group got messages into Cuba by boat exhorting members of Castro's armed forces to rebel. The group also is able to communicate via exile radio with the Cuban underground.

Members of Christ's Army hold sessions every second Sunday in an office in Miami's Little Havana section. Some of the leading Roman Catholic priests in exile assist as spiritual advisers.

BARRIOS SAID Christ's army "has 200-plus members in exile and there must be 11,000 inside Cuba."

A career military man in Cuba, he now works in tomato and sweet potato fields in South Florida.

Barrios works closely with Roman Catholic leaders in Miami's exile colony. He appears to be highly respected in these circles.