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# U.S. Link to Suspect in Air Sabotage

Caracas, Venezuela

A Venezuelan, who is being held on suspicion of involvement in the crash of a Cuban airliner plane that killed 73 persons earlier this month has been in frequent contact with an FBI agent attached to the U.S. embassy here, it has been learned.

The FBI agent, Joe Leo, has also been in contact with at least one of two Cuban exiles being held in connection with the crash.

The contacts were confirmed by the U.S. embassy here.

On October 15, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger declared that "no one in contact with the American government has had anything to do" with the sabotage of the plane.

Leo, an embassy spokesman confirmed, knows two of the four men jailed as suspects in the fire-bombing that led to the crash off Barbados October 6. In addition, Leo's name and telephone number were found among the personal effects of a third suspect.

Cuban Premier Fidel Castro

has accused the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency of participating in the fire-bombing of the airplane and a series of other terrorist actions against Cuba. Following the crash, he announced cancellation of the three-year-old U.S.-Cuban treaty on hijacking.

In response to Castro's charges, Kissinger said in Boston on October 15: "I can state categorically that no official of the U.S. government, no one paid by the American government, no one in contact with the American government has had anything to do" with the airplane sabotage.

Leo's most recent contact with any of the suspects, the embassy said, was with Hernan Ricardo, 25, a Venezuelan held in Trinidad, who has reportedly confessed to placing the bomb aboard the aircraft. Another Venezuelan, Freddy Lugo, 31, is being held with Ricardo in Trinidad. In addition, two Cuban exiles, Luis Posada and Orlando Bosch, are being detained in Caracas in connection with the case.

Leo twice helped Ricardo to get a visa, the embassy said. In 1974, Leo, at Ricardo's request, expedited

the issuance of a visa for the child of a member of the Venezuelan security police — known as Disip. This month Leo helped Ricardo obtain a one-year U.S. business visa for a trip to Puerto Rico on assignment as a photographer for Vision magazine, the spokesman said. Vision magazine has denied any association with Ricardo.

Leo had also had contact with Posada, a Cuban refugee leader held in Caracas.

Posada said Friday that Ricardo worked at his private detective agency. Leo, according to the embassy spokesman, maintained "a casual acquaintance with Luis Posada when Posada was a Disip official... he would see him whenever he went over there... not whenever, but on occasion." Leo has been legal attache at the embassy since 1970, and Posada was one of the five top men in Disip between 1971 and 1973.

The embassy spokesman said he had no explanation why Leo's name and telephone number appear in the appointment book of Lugo, 31, who is being held with Ricardo in Trinidad. Leo has had no

personal contact with Lugo, the spokesman said.

The fourth man being held, Bosch, spoke to reporters at some length on arriving with Posada at a Caracas courthouse Friday for questioning by a judge. Bosch, also a Cuban exile, has been convicted in Miami of terrorist activities.

The United States has asked Venezuela to return Bosch for questioning in connection with the September 21 assassination of Chilean exile Orlando Letelier in Washington.

Bosch, who has been charged at various times with carrying false Chilean, Dominican Republic and Costa Rican passports, said, "I always travel with a false passport for security reasons."

Bosch is leader of the United Revolutionary Organizations Command, a Miami-based group opposed to the Castro government.

Posada and Bosch both said they did not know why they had been arrested and said they were innocent. Posada added: "I neither approve nor condemn" the airliner fire-bombing.

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