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Jury Probe of Anti-Castro Terrorism

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In a move that seems to have been partly provoked by complaints from Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, a federal grand jury here is trying to prevent made-in-Miami terrorism from spreading throughout the Caribbean.

Since last month, the grand jurors have been asking Cuban international incidents: the recent crash of a Cuban airliner, the February shelling of a Soviet freighter near Cuba, the April attack on two fishing boats in the same area and the murder of a chauffeur-bodyguard in an attempted kidnaping of the Cuban consul in Merida, Mexico, in July.

Authorities here are apparently convinced that these episodes and many more were hatched in Miami. And they fear exported violence will continue unless some indictments are issued soon.

"We get the word that the Cubans in Little Havana are very disturbed," one Justice Department lawyer said. "They say the Anglos just don't understand them. I think the Cubans still feel they're patriots and what they're doing is right."

The grand jury probe began October 29 with eight witnesses from the most prominent names in Miami's Latin precincts. They were asked about the recently formed United Revolutionary Organizations Command; its ubiquitous spokesman, Orlando Bosch, who awaits trial in Venezuela for the October 6 bombing of a Cuban airliner in which 73 persons died, and dozens of other reputed anti-Castro terrorists in the Western Hemisphere.

Authoritative sources say Cuban exile terrorism — plotted here and executed elsewhere — is the grand jury's exclusive assignment at present. The jury began its work just weeks after Castro angrily denounced the midair Cubana Airlines explosion, accused the Central Intelligence Agency of complicity in it and other recent attacks on

Cuban government installations, and announced unilateral cancellation of the three-year-old anti-hijacking and piracy agreement with the United States.

Members of the U.S. attorney's office here had long ago requested a meeting with Justice Department and FBI officials in Washington on the grounds that "something had to be done, regardless of our relations with Castro." But it took the Cubana crash and Castro's speech to produce the meeting. "They finally became concerned," said one government lawyer here.

The pattern is not unusual. The government seems to have a habit of blowing hot and cold on illicit Cuban activities that the CIA once promoted so assiduously. The crack-downs have been sporadic.

Intelligence community sources here confirmed that there is ambivalence in Washington on Cuba and the Cuban terrorists. "It's part of our general lack of policy towards Latin America," one said.

Terrorism in Miami has reached new heights over the last two years. The FBI counted 95 bombings and attempted bombings since January, 1974, most of them with a Latin accent.

There were also five assassinations of prominent Cubans, several of them claimed by a hit squad called the "Zero Group." It warned that still more "empty, nothing" countrymen were marked for elimination.

FBI Special Agent in Charge Julius Mattson said he had 168 agents assigned to the Miami office.

Three Cubans will get together on a corner, form a group and issue a communique," said Miami Herald court reporter Joe Crankshaw. "As soon as it gets published, the fourth person to join is an FBI man." The fifth, he might have added, could be a pro-Castro Cuban spy. Castro agents, authorities acknowledged, have probably penetrated the anti-Castro groups, although there is no public proof of this.

Still, the success of the grand jury investigation is not at all sure. "Penetrating the Cuban community is awfully difficult," said one government investigator. Informers, contemptuously called "chivatos" in the Cuban community, are usually needed to break the code of silence.

From the start, terrorism here has been intertwined with ordinary extortion and criminal gangs and racketeers fighting over Little Havana's drug and gambling trade.

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