

NEW YORK
DAILY NEWS

MAY 27 1

'1 Airlifted Supplies To Rebels in Cuba'

Anti-Castro Cubans airlifted a cargo of food, equipment, propaganda leaflets and a complete field hospital from a southern Florida airstrip this week and dropped it by parachute in Cuba.

It was the first major effort to carry supplies to the underground forces in Cuba. The cargo plane evaded the Cuban radar defenses and returned safely.

The story of the flight was told to Jack Hord, city editor of the Pompano Beach (Fla.) Sun-Sentinel, by Manuel Fernandez, a member of the 30th of November Rebel Movement and the International Anti-Communist Brigade. Fernandez was a member of the crew on the plane. His story follows:

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Pompano Beach, Fla., May 26 (CTPS)—I flew a mercy mission over Cuba in what must have been the longest 32 minutes of my life in that plane 1,000 feet above the ground.

Two companions and I flew a supply mission to the 30th of November's forces fighting a guerrilla war in eastern Cuba, the same hills where Fidel Castro started his now infamous revolution eight years ago.

"At the present time we are fighting on 17 fronts inside Cuba. Our leaders have taken a page from Napoleon's book on military strategy and are in the process of setting up a supply line to each of these 17 fronts.

Our twin-engine aircraft took off from a south Florida airstrip early in the morning carrying a cargo of food, equipment, 150,000 propaganda leaflets and a complete field hospital. After a diversionary flight, the pilot, a man who has made many clandestine flights over Cuba in the last five years, turned the plane toward our destination.

Flew at Under 100 Feet

Flying at an altitude of less than 100 feet, the plane approached Cuba from the north. The low altitude enabled us to slip through Castro's radar, which at its best is not too effective.

We did encounter some rough weather which caused the plane to bob and dip and in places we flew into a driving rainstorm.

I didn't realize we had crossed into Cuban territory until the pilot announced it. He advised us to keep a watch for signs of Castro aircraft or possible ground fire.

We had removed the door of the craft prior to takeoff.

The pilot nosed the craft up to 1,000 feet, and held it there. Our drop zone was about 10 minutes' flight from the coast. The plan called for the zone to be marked by underground agents with a single white light.

To the Sierra Maestra

The flight inland proved no more eventful than the flight across water. We did not see a single sign of life from the coast to the foothills of the Sierra Maestra, where we were to make the drop.

The co-pilot and I shoved the cargo near the open door and awaited the pilot's signal to push the package out the port.

It was at this point that we suffered our only anxiety in the entire trip. We were over the area we knew to be the drop zone, but it was not marked as the plan has called for. Finally, after five minutes during which we envisioned all sorts of betrayal, the underground agents on the ground turned on the light.

"There's the light," the pilot said. "When I give the word kick it out." He gave the word and I-kicked.

That completed the first part

of our mission—the most important part. The second phase, though not quite as important, was considered more dangerous.

The Leaflets Next

The remainder of our cargo was 150,000 propaganda leaflets stuffed in three 100-pound sacks. We dropped them on the city of Santiago de Cuba, a populated metropolitan area southwest of Guantanamo naval base.

Getting out could have been more tricky than getting in, but this was accomplished in the same manner as we had entered. The pilot dropped the ship to a low altitude and skimmed the water. As we left the lights of Santiago behind, I wasn't nervous anymore. I felt very good.