

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A1

NEW YORK TIMES

MAY 29 1967

A RANKING CUBAN DEFECTS TO THE U.S.

Man Described as a General Flies Family to Key West

By NEIL A. LEWIS
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 28 — A man identifying himself as a high-ranking Cuban military official defected to the United States today, flying a small plane to a Florida naval base, Administration officials said.

The Justice Department said the defector identified himself as Rafael del Piño Diaz, the deputy chief of staff of the Cuban Defense Ministry and former chief of the Cuban Air Force. The defector flew to the Key West Naval Air Station with four family members aboard a military training plane that he piloted himself, officials said.

"If he is who he says he is, he is the biggest intelligence catch we've ever had from Cuba," said a senior Reagan Administration official.

Believed at Bay of Pigs

According to a researcher at the Cuban American National Foundation, a Washington-based research organization that opposes the Castro Government, Mr. del Piño is a brigadier general with the Cuban Air Force and a combat instructor with its western air brigade.

The researcher, José Cardenas, said General del Piño was 47 or 48 years old,

had flown on the side of the Cuban Government at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 and is believed to have fought with Cuban forces in Africa. The researcher said General del Piño was the author of "Dawn at Girón," a book about the Bay of Pigs.

WQBA, a Spanish-language radio station in Florida, said General del Piño fought with the Cuban brigade in the southern African nation of Angola. If so, this could prove a valuable area of intelligence for the Reagan Administration.

The Cubans maintain a force of approximately 30,000 in Angola in support of the Marxist Government there. The Reagan Administration has been providing military aid to the rebel group fighting the Angolan Government and its Cuban allies.

Interviewed by the F.B.I.

Administration officials said the defector was being interviewed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "The district director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service has paroled him into the United States as a matter of public interest," according to a Justice Department spokesman.

He was accompanied by his wife, two daughters and a son, a State Department statement said. Administration officials said the plane would be returned to Cuba shortly.

The last time a Cuban official flew himself to the United States appears to have been in 1969, when Lieut. Eduardo Guerra Jimenez defected to Homestead Air Force Base in Florida aboard a MIG-17 fighter aircraft. Ten years later, Lieutenant Guerra hijacked a commercial jetliner that took off from New York and forced it to fly to Havana.

P. 33

STAT

05-29-87 FRI 08:22