

REPORT: CONTRAS HELP TERRORISM SUSPECT ESCAPE VENEZUELA, GIVE HIM JOB
MIAMI, FL

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A CIA -trained Cuban exile who fought at the Bay of Pigs bribed his way out of the Venezuelan jail where he was held in a fatal airliner bombing, then escaped the country with the help of the Contra supply network, The Miami Herald reported Sunday.

Two Cuban exiles hid Luis Posada Carriles, 58, in Venezuela after his 1985 escape and directed him to a job with the Contras in El Salvador, the Herald reported.

Posada's friends in the Contra supply network gave him a false Salvadoran passport under the alias Ramon Medina to let him enter El Salvador, the Herald said, citing an unidentified Miami wholesaler.

The newspaper said the wholesaler knew Posada before he was jailed in the 1976 bombing of a Cubana de Aviacion DC-8 that was blown up shortly after takeoff from Bridgetown, Barbados, killing 73 people.

According to the Herald, Salvadoran telephone records show that Posada's wife, family doctor and longtime friend have been called regularly from a house in San Salvador rented by Ramon Medina.

Two people acknowledged that it was Posada who made the calls from El Salvador, the Herald said.

Eugene Hasenfus, the American flier captured last month after being shot down with an arms shipment destined for Contra rebels in Nicaragua, has identified Ramon Medina as one of two Cuban exiles directing Contra supply efforts at El Salvador's Ilopango Air Base.

Posada, an explosives expert and anti-Castro militant who fought in the 1961 Bay of Pigs attempt to overthrow the communist leader, was jailed in Venezuela for nine years awaiting trial for alleged involvement in the Cubana bombing.

He was told while in prison that a job with the Contras awaited him in El Salvador, said the unidentified Miami wholesaler.

On Aug. 18, 1985, after Posada paid prison officials \$28,600, he walked out of the San Juan de los Morros jail 60 miles south of Caracas and disappeared, the Herald said it was told by Venezuelan Cabinet ministers.

Of the bribe money, \$11,000 apparently came from the sale of Posada's house in Miami by a Cuban exile couple, the newspaper said. The source of the rest of the bribe money is not known.

Posada's Venezuelan attorney, Francisco Leandro Mora, wouldn't confirm details of the escape, but he said it was meticulously planned.

Leandro Mora and Venezuelan journalist Rafael del Naranco, who interviewed Posada, said the two Cuban exiles who gave Posada papers to enter El Salvador hid Posada in Caracas for a month.

The exiles then took Posada to a house on the Venezuelan coast for a second month, the Herald said it was told by Leandro Mora and del Naranco.

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Late last fall Posada was hidden on a sugar plantation in the Dominican Republic before going to a logging camp in Honduras, the Herald said. At the camp, Posada's escorts supplied him with the counterfeit passport and Posada crossed the border into El Salvador, the newspaper said.

Another unidentified Bay of Pigs veteran said it was likely that Posada had been brought into the Contra supply operation by Felix Rodriguez, The Herald said.

Rodriguez is a longtime Cuban-American CIA agent whom Vice President George Bush recommended as an adviser to the Salvadoran military. When Posada arrived in El Salvador, Rodriguez was already working at Ilopango under the alias Max Gomez, The Herald said.

Little is known about the supply operation at Ilopango, or Posada's work there. Hasenfus said Medina was an errand boy for Gomez.

However, The Herald quoted other unidentified sources as saying Posada has more responsibility.

Other research on the telephone calls from the Salvadoran safe house believed rented by Posada showed more than 60 calls this summer to Miami's Southern Air Transport, the former CIA airline that serviced Hasenfus' ill-fated Contra supply plane.