

US government moves to gag terrorist on CIA ties

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With his trial on immigration charges set for May 11, the US government has filed a motion in federal court seeking to bar the international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles from testifying on his role as an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Venezuela has demanded that Posada Carriles be extradited to face charges there related to his masterminding of a 1976 bombing of a Cuban civilian passenger jet that killed 73 people. He evaded punishment for the crime—at the time the worst single act of terrorism in the Western Hemisphere—by escaping a Venezuelan prison in 1985.

Violating international and bilateral treaties, Washington has rebuffed Venezuela's request, charging Posada Carriles instead with minor violations of US immigration law for entering the US without a visa and lying to immigration officials. Last month, the terrorist, who had been in federal custody since May 2005, was set free on bail and returned to Miami.

The release has provoked international protests and exposed the hypocrisy of the so-called "global war on terrorism" proclaimed by a government that has sponsored and continues to harbor and protect a wanted terrorist.

The nine-page motion submitted to the federal court in El Paso, Texas, argues that the relationship between Posada Carriles and the CIA ended 30 years ago and therefore is irrelevant.

Declassified documents have established that Carriles was recruited as an agent of the CIA in 1961, was sent into the US Army for a year of training in demolition and terrorist tactics and remained directly on the CIA payroll at least until 1967. From 1969 to 1974, he served as a senior officer in the Venezuelan secret police, DISIP, charged with capturing, torturing and killing left-wing opponents of the government. During that period he remained an informant and "asset" of the CIA in Latin America.

In 1976, he planned the airline bombing, leaving its execution to two employees of his private detective agency that he set up in Caracas after a change of government forced him out of the secret police. Just two weeks before the October 1976 airline bombing, he was involved in another terrorist attack, this one in the center of Washington. A car bomb killed the exiled former foreign minister of Chile, Orlando Letelier, and an American aide, Ronni Moffitt.

After his escape from prison in Venezuela, Posada Carriles made his way to El Salvador, where he became a key operative in the illegal terror war against Nicaragua financed by the CIA and directed by the network established by the Reagan administration under the direction of Lt. Col. Oliver North of the National Security Council. He went on to Guatemala,

becoming a government intelligence officer during a brutal counterinsurgency campaign that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

In the 1990s, by his own admission, Posada Carriles directed a series of terrorist bombings against hotels and tourist spots in Cuba, killing an Italian tourist.

And, in November 2000, he was involved in an aborted attempt to blow up a conference hall in Panama, where Cuban President Fidel Castro was scheduled to speak to hundreds of people. He was arrested and jailed for the plot, but then pardoned by outgoing Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso in 2004, reportedly as the result of either US pressure or bribes from anti-Castro Cuban exile groups.

In response to the government attempt to quash any public testimony about Posada Carriles's ties to the CIA, the terrorist's defense lawyers filed a countermotion this week, insisting that it was impossible to discuss the "context" of the case without dealing with their client's relation with the agency. Moreover, the document claimed, this relationship "lasted for 25 years."

"The government's statement that his service to the United States ended in 1976 is incorrect," the document said.

The implications of the motion are clear. Posada Carriles was working for the CIA when he planned and executed the terrorist bombing that murdered 73 people aboard the Cuban plane as well as the car-bomb assassination in Washington. Moreover, he remained an agent or "asset" of the US intelligence agency while continuing to carry out acts of terrorist and repressive violence in Cuba, Central America and elsewhere for at least another decade. Both of the 1976 terrorist acts took place when George H.W. Bush, the current US president's father, was director of the CIA.

Declassified documents obtained by the National Security Archive <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB153/index.htm> in 2005 establish that the CIA had advance intelligence on the planned airline bombing and that the FBI's attaché in Caracas had repeated contacts with one of the operatives who placed the bomb on the plane and, just days before the bombing, obtained a visa for him to travel to the US.

The US government's attempt to gag Posada Carriles about his CIA ties and the countermotion alleging that these connections spanned at least 25 years expose the real reason that the Bush administration refuses to abide by international law and extradite him to Venezuela to face trial.

While the administration has offered the incredible justification that Posada Carriles could face torture in Venezuela—this from a government that has not only tortured its own detainees at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, but also deliberately sent them to other countries to be tortured—the real reason is that such a prosecution would expose Washington's role in decades of terrorism and repression in Latin America.

On April 25, Venezuela's ambassador to the Organization of American States, Nelson Pineda, charged the US with harboring a "convicted and confessed terrorist" and demanded that Washington comply with its bilateral extradition treaty with Venezuela. Pineda read out a statement from the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry that stated:

“The freeing of the terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is the final result of the maneuver that the government of George W. Bush put in motion to protect him and with this act it promotes impunity and disgracefully mocks the memory of the victims of the bombing of the Cubana de Aviación plane that took place in 1976.

“This act of complicity, committed by the sinister American president, seeks to buy the silence of Posada Carriles, who has for many years been an agent of the CIA and a pawn of the Bush clan, as the declassified documents of the US demonstrate and therefore has valuable information about the criminal activities carried out against the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.”

Responding to these charges, the US alternate representative to the OAS, Margarita Riva-Geoghegan, ignored Venezuela’s extradition request, baldly stating, “The United States is not harboring Luis Posada Carriles.” She continued, “The United States is proceeding with its own national prosecution in an area where Mr. Posada Carriles has broken US law.”

Such claims are absurd on their face. The charges of murder and terrorism, substantiated by Washington’s own declassified documents, clearly take precedence over the minor immigration infractions that are being used as a pretense for ignoring the demand for extradition and providing a cover for what is in reality the harboring and protection of Posada Carriles.

In Cuba, meanwhile, the annual May Day demonstration in Havana was dominated by signs and slogans demanding the extradition of Posada Carriles as well as the freeing of the “Cuban Five,” five Cuban nationals who have been jailed in the US since 1998. Framed up on conspiracy and espionage-related charges for monitoring anti-Castro terrorist exile groups based in Miami, the five were convicted in 2001 and sentenced to jail terms ranging from 15 years to life.

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