

FBI USED TRAP TO CATCH U.S. OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH SPYING FOR CUBA

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

February 19, 2000, Saturday, FIVE STAR LIFT EDITION

Copyright 2000 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Inc.

Section: NEWS, Pg. 4

Length: 512 words

Byline: The Associated Press

Dateline: MIAMI

Body

* He was arrested after passing along phony information about an impending defection, the agency said.

A **U.S.** immigration **official charged** with **spying** for **Cuba** was arrested after falling into a **trap** set by the **FBI**, investigators said Friday.

The **FBI** said it fed Mariano Faget phony information about an impending defection and then **caught** him passing it on just 12 minutes later to a contact with ties to the Cuban government.

Faget, 54, a Cuban-born supervisor in the Miami office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, may have been passing on classified information about Cuban defectors for some time, authorities said.

According to court papers, Faget met with Cuban intelligence **officials** in Miami on at least two occasions, contacted **officials** with the agency that represents **Cuba** in Washington and had regular contact with the man he called last week in the sting - a New York businessman with ties to the Cuban government.

Authorities said they had been investigating Faget for a year but wouldn't say how long they believe he may have been passing on classified information. They also said they were uncertain about the effects of his alleged espionage - whether any Cubans were prevented from coming to the **United States** or even killed, for example.

Faget (pronounced fy-EHT'), who was arrested Thursday, is **charged** with violating the federal Espionage Act and making false statements to a federal officer. The first **charge** carries up to 10 years in prison; the second could bring five years.

Appearing in court Friday, Faget was ordered held until a bail hearing Thursday.

Defense attorney Joel Kaplan would not comment, nor would Faget's family members and friends.

Federal prosecutors said they will ask that Faget be held as a flight risk and a danger to the community.

Faget began working for the INS as a clerk 34 years ago, INS district director Bob Wallis said. He would have been eligible for retirement next month.

As a supervisory district adjudication officer for the INS, Faget had "secret" security clearance and oversaw decisions that affected the residency status of immigrants, the **FBI** said.

FBI USED TRAP TO CATCH U.S. OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH SPYING FOR CUBA

FBI spokesman Paul Mallett said Faget waited only 12 minutes Feb. 11 before he passed on the phony information that a Cuban **official** was about to defect.

According to court papers, INS and **FBI officials** showed Faget pictures of a Cuban intelligence **official** he knew, and told Faget that the man wanted to defect and that the information was secret and very sensitive.

After the meeting, Faget returned to his office and **used** his personal cell phone to call the New York businessman.

"Faget told the businessman that 'a person we both know' was 'one of the ones working with the Americans,'" **U.S.** Attorney Thomas Scott said in a statement. "Faget then identified the Cuban intelligence officer by name."

Later, Faget called the man from home and discussed the case in more detail, the **FBI** said.

A spokesman for Cuban Interests Section declined to comment. The White House also had no immediate comment.

Classification

Language: English

Subject: ESPIONAGE (89%); NEGATIVE PERSONAL NEWS (89%); ARRESTS (88%); IMMIGRATION LAW (86%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (86%); INVESTIGATIONS (85%); CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS (69%); INTELLIGENCE SERVICES (69%); IMMIGRATION (68%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (68%); FALSE STATEMENTS (63%); TALKS & MEETINGS (60%)

Company: **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION** (94%); **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION** (94%)

Organization: **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION** (94%); **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION** (94%)

Geographic: **CUBA** (93%); **UNITED STATES** (92%)

Load-Date: February 19, 2000