

## ***U.S. Releases Cuban Bombing Suspect, Angering Havana***

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### **Body**

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A 79-year-old anti-Castro **Cuban** exile and former C.I.A. operative linked to the **bombing** of a **Cuban** airliner was **released** on bail yesterday and immediately returned to Miami to await trial on immigration fraud charges.

The man, Luis Posada Carriles, was **released** from the Otero County Prison in Chaparral, N.M., after posting a \$350,000 bond on the immigration charges.

His **release** infuriated the authorities in Cuba and Venezuela, who have been trying to extradite him to stand trial over the 1976 airliner **bombing**, which killed 73 people, including several teenage members of Cuba's national fencing team.

The **United States** Justice Department had tried unsuccessfully to prevent his **release**, arguing that his escape from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 increased the risk that he might flee before the scheduled start of his trial on immigration charges on May 11.

The court rejected the Justice Department's argument, but it increased security measures by ordering Mr. Posada to be fitted with an ankle bracelet to track his whereabouts. He was ordered to remain under house detention with his wife in Miami until the immigration trial begins.

Mr. Posada, a gray-haired former intelligence operative and **United States** Army officer, has been detained since May 2005, when he entered the **United States** illegally.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela said Thursday in Caracas, "We demand that they extradite that terrorist and murderer to Venezuela, instead of protecting him."

Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera, the chief of the **Cuban** Interests Section, Cuba's diplomatic representation in Washington, told Agence France-Presse yesterday, "Cuba forcefully condemns this decision and holds the government of the **United States** totally responsible for the fact that Posada Carriles is free in Miami."

Prensa Latina, the **Cuban** news agency, reported last night that 50,000 people had gathered at a demonstration in Bayamo, a city in southeastern Cuba, to protest the **release** of Mr. Posada and to demand that he be tried for the jetliner **bombing**.

The **Cuban** government has also accused Mr. Posada, an avowed opponent of the island's Communist rule, of plotting to assassinate the **Cuban** leader, Fidel Castro, in Panama in 2000, and of planning a series of explosions in tourist hotels in **Havana** in 1997.

Mr. Posada was jailed in Panama in connection with the attempt on Mr. Castro's life but was later pardoned by Panamanian officials. He admitted, then later denied, that he had directed the wave of hotel bombings in 1997.

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He has also repeatedly denied responsibility for the **bombing** of the plane, known as Cubana Airlines Flight 455. The jet blew apart and crashed off the coast of Barbados on Oct. 6, 1976.

Investigators in Venezuela, where Mr. Posada had been chief of operations in the secret intelligence police, traced at least one of the **bombs** to the plane's luggage compartment. The investigators found that two Venezuelans had checked bags through to **Havana** but got off the plane at a scheduled stop in Barbados.

The men had worked for Mr. Posada, who was arrested in Venezuela and charged with the **bombing**. He escaped from prison in 1985 dressed as a priest after associates bribed a guard.

**Cuban** officials have accused the **United States** of hypocrisy in battling terrorists by not prosecuting Mr. Posada or deporting him to stand trial on terrorism charges in another country. They routinely refer to Mr. Posada as "the bin Laden of the Americas."

Mr. Posada's shadowy past as a Central Intelligence Agency operative put the **United States** in a politically delicate position. In his early years, he had received military training in the **United States** and worked for the C.I.A. to bring down the Castro government. He participated in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Later he was involved in supplying arms to rebels in Nicaragua.

The **United States** has acknowledged his long record of violent acts. In court papers filed in his immigration fraud case, the Justice Department described him as "an unrepentant criminal and admitted mastermind of terrorist plots."

Mr. Posada was detained in 2005 after he entered the **United States** on false pretenses. According to an indictment unsealed this year, he lied when he told border officials he had paid a smuggler to drive him from Mexico to Texas. He actually entered the country on a small boat. He also lied about using an alias.

An immigration judge has blocked Mr. Posada's extradition to Cuba or Venezuela, ruling that he could be subject to torture in those countries. Efforts to deport him to another country have failed because so far no other country has been willing to take him.

His arrival in Miami yesterday afternoon set off mixed reactions among the area's many **Cuban** exiles, who see him as both a patriot and an embarrassment.

"We have been fighting this war on terror, and here we are **releasing** a man who has a history of terrorist acts and is a fugitive of justice in other countries," said Elena Freyre, executive director of the **Cuban**-American Defense League, a moderate exile group in Miami. "It's absolutely appalling."

But Miguel Saavedra, president of Vigilia Mambisa, a small, hard-line anti-Castro exile group, said he felt vindicated by Mr. Posada's **release** on bail.

"The only ones accusing him are the governments of Cuba and Venezuela," Mr. Saavedra said. "They can only accuse him because they haven't been able to prove anything. If he is sent to Cuba or Venezuela, it would be the equivalent of executing him."

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## Graphic

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Photo: A billboard in **Havana** bears a likeness of Luis Posada Carriles and reads, "Cuba declares him guilty" in the **bombing** of a **Cuban** jetliner in 1976. (Photo by Javier Galeano/Associated Press)

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