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## Cuba Says Men Arrested Were Terrorists

by LADB Staff

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Cuban authorities announced June 20 the arrest of three Cuban-born Florida men on an island off the coast of the central province of Villa Clara. The announcement was made on the television program Mesa Redonda, a nightly panel discussion of current events. The topic for June 20 was the conviction in Miami of five Cubans on espionage-related charges (see NotiCen, 2001-06-21).

Interior Ministry official Manuel Heyvia said on the program that Hihosvanni Suris de la Torre, Santiago Padron Quintero, and Maximo Pradera Valdes were arrested after an exchange of gunfire. The men were carrying four AK-47 assault rifles, an M-3 rifle, three Makarov pistols, night-vision goggles, US\$3,038, and 970 Cuban pesos. Heyvia said the men were linked to the Miami-based anti-Castro organizations Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Alpha 66, and Comandos F-4.

Alpha 66 president Andres Nazario Sargen acknowledged that all three had ties with his organization and that Suris de la Torre and Pradera were still members. However, the men had acted on their own, he said. "They...wanted me to send them to Cuba, to provide a boat for a plan to go into the [Escambray] mountains, and I told them conditions were not right for that," Nazario said on Miami television.

### *Telephone call said to implicate*

Miami developer Heyvia showed a video on the Mesa Redonda program in which Suris de la Torre is seen in a May 3 telephone conversation with Miami real-estate developer Santiago Alvarez Fernandez. The Interior Ministry says Alvarez is a member of CANF and directed the three-man incursion. During the telephone call, which Suris de la Torre placed from the Villa Marista prison under instructions from Cuban authorities, he asks Alvarez, "The other day when you told me about the Tropicana [nightclub in Havana], do you want me do something there?" "If you want to do that, fine," Alvarez answers, "it's all the same to me. Over there you will have the advantage that a couple of small cans would put an end to it....Know what I mean?" Asked about the video, Alvarez said he would have to have more information about it. He said one had to be careful with what Fidel Castro says. "He has always been a liar," said Alvarez.

CANF spokeswoman Ninoska Perez said the organization had no connection with the three men and did not advocate the use of violence against the Cuban government. CANF executive director Joe Garcia said he did not know if Alvarez was a CANF member and denied any connection with the three arrested men. He suggested the men might have entered Cuba to visit relatives. The timing of the announcement of the arrests coincided with a new campaign in Cuba to discredit the conviction of the five Cubans in Miami.

It underscored the Cuban government's claim that the convicted Cuban agents were sent to Miami to gather information from such groups as CANF and Alpha 66 as protection against terrorist

assaults on Cuba. Heyvia said, "This interminable sequence of plans and violent aggressions forged in the United States constitutes irrefutable proof of the tolerance and complicity of the North American authorities with these criminal acts." The official government daily Granma defended the five Cubans, asserting that Cuba "has the right to defend itself from its enemies."

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