

# SI ATERRIZAN EN LA BASE, LOS ENTREGAMOS A CUBA.....

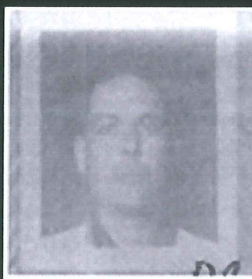
by VICENTE J. BLANCO CAPOTE #2503



# 2485 CAPITAN  
JOSE PEREZ MENENDEZ



# 2478 CO-PILOTO  
LEONARDO SEDA REYES



# 2201 ING. DE VUELO  
CANDIDO SIERRA REY



#2503 Radio-Operador  
VICENTE BLANCO CAPOTE



# 2459 Navegante  
VICENTE SECADES LOPEZ



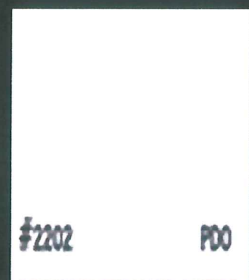
# 2414 PDO  
ALBERTO PEREZ MARTINEZ



# 2216 PDO  
FERNANDO PUIG COSSIO



# 2447 PDO  
RAMIRO SANCHEZ MONTESINOS



#2202 PDO  
SALVADOR MIRALLES POVEDA

# Exile's Plane Downed

## Bombings Hit Havana

HAVANA — (UPI) — The Fidel Castro firing squads resumed operations Tuesday with the pre-dawn execution of two youths convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes.

The executions of Rigoberto Hernandez Estevez and Rolando Tamargo Gutierrez were the first in Cuba since Jan. 20 but the 13th and 14th since the start of the year. They were charged with illegal possession of arms and explosives supplied, as the government prosecutor put it, "by the (U.S.) Central Intelligence Agency."

The executions closely followed a long Castro television speech in which he said Cuban anti-aircraft gunners had shot down one plane "sent by the CIA" off Baracoa, in Eastern Cuba, last Saturday and seriously damaged another over Cabanas, in Pinar del Rio province, Sunday.

(Reports from Kingston, Jamaica, said a bullet-riddled DC4 aircraft with nine Cuban exiles aboard made a forced landing at Montego Bay Airport. The plane was reported on its way from Guatemala to Tampa, Fla., but from anti-Castro pamphlets found aboard it was deduced the aircraft had been engaged in a pamphlet raid on Cuba.)

The executions Tuesday were interpreted as a government reply to the mounting anti-Castro wave of terrorism sweeping Cuba.

While Castro was speaking to the leftist first Regional Conference of Plantation Workers, two large bombs exploded in Greater Havana and

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# The Mirror

Wednesday, March 8, 1961

No. 97 Flc



## Kidnap Suspect

Handcuffed between French police, Rolando de Beaufort is escorted from police headquarters at Annecy, France. Police

said de Beaufort, also named Rolland, and a c Larcher, admitted last of 4-year-old auto he The kidnaping netted ransom money. (See sto

# Retake Tarned



—Associated Press Wirephoto

ing into the cage of her mother, Pat-  
The cub, separated from her par-  
was permitted to play in the lobby  
the zoo's main animal house where

## 2 Cuban Youths Die At Wall

Continued from Page 1  
a fire of suspected incendiary  
origin broke out at the na-  
tionalized 25 million dollar  
Esso refinery plant at Belot,  
across the bay from the city.

Reports that some persons  
were wounded could not be  
confirmed immediately. Po-  
lice cordoned off two miles of  
the area.

A militiaman guarding a pa-  
per mill in downtown Havana  
was stabbed to death by under-  
ground rebels seeking to set  
the mill afire. At least three  
militiamen have been killed  
and a score of civilians injured  
in the underground sabotage  
and terrorism of the past week.

In addition to the executions  
of Hernandez and Tamargo,  
the government sentenced the  
former's sister, Gladys, to 30  
years in prison on charges the  
school which she headed in sub-  
urban Marianao was used as  
an arsenal and headquarters  
by the anti-Castro plotters.

In a mood ranging from ner-  
vousness and emotional depres-  
sion to good humor, Castro  
lashed out anew at the United  
States in the television talk  
which ended early Tuesday.

He said Cuba plans to ask  
Britain to extradite the Cuban  
exiles aboard the plane which  
landed at Montego Bay.

Castro told the delegates to  
the plantation conference that  
the "deterioration" in the U.S.  
economy made a "revolution"  
in that country "inevitable."

"The time will come when  
the United States has its revo-  
lution . . . that is what moti-  
vates the stupid crimes and  
threats of the leaders of that  
nation . . . because they know  
they are as good as con-  
quered . . ."

## Career Man

# Lawyers Cull Juror Panel With Finesse

By GENE MILLER  
Herald Staff Writer

FORT PIERCE — The two sets of lawyers in the  
Chillingworth murder trial picked the jury members with  
the meticulous care of a director casting a million-dolla  
play.

The stakes in this real-life drama are life or death  
And both the defense and the prosecution know it.

Each side used its 10 challenges with care, hesitatio  
and precision.

One lawyer watched a prospective juror in the secon  
row, third from right, jerk convulsively on one of th  
cushioned swivel chairs and asked him if he had an  
physical afflictions.

No, the juror said — it was  
simply that the swivel chair  
was loose.

The juror to his right leane  
d back easily, grinned and  
rested the back of his skull  
on a wall smeared by the hair  
oil of uncounted previous jur-  
ors.

The ex-assistant Scoutmas-  
ter and the ex-choir boy who  
are confessed assassins - for-  
hire — Floyd (Lucky) Hol-  
zapfel and George David  
(Bobby) Lincoln — were not  
present Tuesday.

They remained in the West

★ ★ ★

## Jurors Chosen in Peel Trial

Continued from Page 1

ing battle over the handsome  
Peel's life was taking shape.

O'Connell made no secret of  
his intention to go all out to  
get a death penalty for Peel,  
specifically charged with being  
an accessory before the fact  
of first degree murder.

Palm Beach jail, 58 mil-  
south.

Also absent and unneed-  
Tuesday were most of the wi-  
nesses, including Mrs. Irer  
MacEwen, the gray-haired la-  
who stood silently behind th  
closed swinging doors of th  
courtroom. She was Jud  
C. E. Chillingworth's secreta  
the day he disappeared  
June 15, 1955.

Phil O'Connell's sudden fer-  
Except for State Attorn  
Phil O'Connell's sudden fer-  
ciousness when the defen-  
casually mentioned the "blo  
thirsty" prosecution, much  
the first day's edginess w  
gone.

The courthouse janitor i  
membered to raise the Ame-  
can flag in the front ya  
Tuesday, and someone di-  
posed of the empty whis-  
bottle that sat on the sit  
walk all day Monday.

Judge D. C. Smith allow  
the 18 reporters to move fr  
the far left side of the co  
into the first two rows on  
right. And, for the first ti  
no one had to use the wind  
sill as a seat.

In fact, 18 of 120 courtro  
seats were vacant at one p  
Tuesday, and the uniform  
sheriff's men outside per-  
ted anyone to enter. A  
who did was an untanned t  
lat in shorts from Kansas (  
Mo.

Watch that as obviously . . . seemed almost as if

**SI ATERRIZAN EN GUANTANAMO, LOS ENTREGAMOS**, palabras dichas por Billy Campbell Jefe de la Base RAYO, en Retalhuleu en el briefing efectuado en las primeras horas del 5 de Marzo de 1961, en sus oficinas de la Torre de Control.

El día anterior nos habían acuartelados en el cuarto habilitado para tal efecto en el edificio de la Torre de Control, estábamos completamente aislados, no podíamos hablar con nadie, como había efectuado varios viajes anteriormente sabía la rutina, para otros era una novedad. No todos los miembros de la Fuerza Aérea de Liberación, habían tenido la posibilidad de hacer un viaje a Cuba, este era mi sexto viaje, siempre tuve la suerte de que mi avión no hubiera recibido un solo tiro, hubo otros que no fueron tan afortunados y pasaron más sustos.

La mañana del 5 de Marzo, después del desayuno fuimos llevados al cuarto de la Torre de Control, donde se realizaría el briefing.

El avión sería un C-54 Skymaster (comercialmente DC-4), cuatrimotor. Estábamos presentes, el personal americano de apoyo logístico, compuesto por el navegante encargado del plan de vuelo, seguridad, el jefe americano de la base. Y nosotros los tripulantes: Capitán José Pérez Menéndez #2485, co-piloto Leonardo Seda Reyes #2478, Ingeniero de vuelo Candido Sierra Rey #2201, Navegante Vicente Secades López #2459, Radio-Operador Vicente Blanco-Capote #2503, PDO's Ramiro Sánchez Montesinos #2447, Salvador Miralles Poveda #2202, Alberto Pérez Martínez #2414, y Fernando Puig Cossio #2216.

Colocado sobre un trípode había un mapa de Cuba, el cual tenía una lamina de plástico transparente, con una línea trazada hasta Cuba, en la que estaban señalados letras del alfabeto (empezando en la "A") diferentes puntos, hasta llegar a la zona de los dropping, esa era la ruta de ida. Para la vuelta había el mismo procedimiento de una línea y la continuidad de las letras indicando el sitio por donde estaba el avión. Yo transmitía una señal cada vez que el capitán me indicaba sobre que letra estaba, así la base sabía por donde íbamos, aparte de eso había un sistema de señales "Q" (sistema internacional de llamadas, en el cual son tres letras solamente, empezando con la "Q") cada señal "Q" se le atribuye una acción, la cual puede ser: "su transmisión varía" o "tenemos una emergencia", etc. En el caso nuestro las señales transmitidas estaban de acuerdo a nuestro trabajo, ejemplo: "QSM significaba estamos recibiendo fuego antiaéreo" o "QSP estamos cambiando de rumbo"

La misión era ir a la Sierra del Escambray, ubicada en la costa Sur de Cuba cerca de la ciudad de Cienfuegos, la información suministrada por la CIA, era que había tres focos guerrilleros, los cuales estaban rodeados y necesitaban con urgencia suministros.

Todas las instrucciones eran grabadas, el Jefe de la Base "Billy", comenzaba dando el nombre de cada miembro de la tripulación y su cargo después seguía explicando el plan de vuelo, el objeto de la misión, la capacidad de respuesta que tenía la Fuerza Aérea Cubana y los aviones que tenían, las condiciones que esperaban del tiempo ese día y las advertencias en el caso que tuviéramos algún accidente que pudiera interrumpir nuestro viaje de regreso a la base.

La primera advertencia fue:

**BAJO NINGUNA CIRCUNSTANCIA PUEDEN ATERRIZAR EN LA BASE NAVAL DE GUANTANAMO, EN CASO DE HACERLO, NO SERAN PROTEGIDOS Y SERAN ENTREGADOS A LAS AUTORIDADES CUBANAS.**

(esto esta corroborado en los Documentos Desclasificados del Pentágono, **Released as Sanitized 1998, OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE BAY OF PIGS OPERATION, Volume III, Evolution of CIA's, Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961, (, pages 1-201)**, Se puede leer la prohibición en la pagina 120, parte superior, donde se lee:

**Agency agreed that all Cubans participating in overflight of Cuba.....**

La segunda advertencia, era el cover-history / la historia a contar, la cual era:

**Volamos para una compañía del Sr. Goudie, llevando una carga y al pasar por territorio cubano, por un error; nos habían disparado. Nos dieron dos numeros telefónicos de Guatemala los cuales estarían permanentemente con personal, por si había una emergencia**

En lo que sería el pasillo del avión tenía instalado un sistema de rieles con ruedas sobre las cuales estaban las palet con las cajas de suministros y sus paracaídas, de la cual salía el enganche para la línea estática. Los PDO, abrían la puerta del avión y agregaban una pequeña extensión de riel, la cual sobresalía de la puerta. Quitaban las cunas que mantenían las palet en su sitio, estas tenían las cajas colocadas sobre cada palet, lucían como un tren de carga y esperando los cambios de señales de la luz roja a verde. Al cambio de luz los PDO empezaban a empujar la carga, las palet rodaban e iban saliendo del avión. Los paracaídas se iban abriendo a medida que la línea amarrada al paracaídas y enganchada en la línea estática, hacía tensión y arrancaba la pieza de tela que cubría la apertura por donde saldría el paracaídas. El paracaídas se empezaría a inflar a medida que le iba entrando el aire.

Salimos de la Base RAYO, alrededor de las 05:00 PM, el avión se remontaba a 13000 pies para poder cruzar las montañas desde el Pacífico al Atlántico, después el avión descendía de altura y volábamos a unos 8000 pies de altura, y

después descendía, 2000 pies de altura, hasta que al llegar a los límites territoriales de Cuba descendía a 800 pies sobre el nivel mar, haciendo las correcciones necesarias para entrar en Cuba y volar sobre las montañas del Escambray al sitio o los sitios de los droppings. Estas eran misiones en la cual el factor sorpresa era la que protegía a nuestros aviones.

El navegante Vicente Secades, hacia un rato me había indicado que transmitiera la letra correspondiente a posición del avión y ahora me preparaba para transmitir la que indicaba el primer dropping de los tres que realizaríamos esta noche. Los PDO's, habían procedido a revisar las cajas instaladas sobre los palet y que las líneas de los paracaídas estuvieran enganchadas a la línea estática, e igualmente habían revisado los rieles estuvieran alineados correctamente.

Se respiraba la tensión del momento, en mi caso rezaba porque no hubiera fuego antiaéreo, sería mi sexto viaje a Cuba y hasta ahora había tenido mucha suerte. Era el cuarto viaje al Escambray ya había ido en Noviembre 7/60, Diciembre 30/60, Febrero 6/61, el último viaje había sido a la zona de Imias y pasando por Baracoa, ese fue el 8 de Febrero de 1961 y fue un viaje agotador de aproximadamente 12 horas, y lo más triste fue no poder tirar las armas en Imias porque no había señal de la guerrilla.

Andando semanas antes por la armería tropecé con dos planchas de acero que estaban tiradas en el piso, al momento las cogí y pregunte que eran, Me contestaron que eran parte del blindaje lateral de la cabina del B-26. Me las regalaron y las tenía guardada para usarlas en los próximos viajes a Cuba. Este sería mi segundo viaje con las planchas. Cuando entre en el avión procedí a colocarlas en el asiento, y Vicente Secades el navegante al ver lo que estaba haciendo, me pidió que le facilitara una, y así lo hice.

Cuando estamos llegando a Cuba, el capitán le recuerda a la tripulación que tienen que ponerse los arneses y colocarse el paracaídas auxiliar el cual va enganchado en el pecho, un peso mas, me acomodo la pistola 45 que me había dado José Raffo antes de salir en Diciembre con los teams de infiltración.

*(Nota: los Americanos no permitían armas de fuego entre el personal cubano, las únicas eran las de la policía aérea y cuando hacíamos guardia de noche un carabina M-1, con un magazine de 15 balas)*

Empieza el primer dropping, ya tengo mas de cuatro horas con los auriculares puestos, las orejas se me derriten por el calor, no puedo quitármelos, hasta después del dropping, el motivo era por si daban la contraorden de abortar la misión, tenía que estar listo e informarlo al capitán, ya había pasado por esa experiencia el 28 de Enero de 1961 íbamos al Central Australia cuando recibí la señal de abortar el viaje, la misma era de quince segundos seguidos de puntos. Un PDO viene corriendo a la cabina y le dicen al capitán que la carga se había salido del carril y había bloqueado la puerta del avión y no se podían lanzar las cajas. Pérez Menéndez inmediatamente cambio de rumbo, y decide salir al mar,

y que los PDO arreglen la carga. Y reiniciar el dropping, sabemos la importancia de estos suministros para la guerrilla, según los americanos era de vida o muerte, esa noche eran tres dropping, en tres lugares diferentes de la Sierra del Escambray.

Empieza de nuevo el dropping, alguien dice que han apagado el faro que esta a la entrada de la costa de Cuba, continua el vuelo, entramos en Cuba, de pronto el cielo se empieza iluminar con las trazadoras del fuego antiaéreo, en el avión tu sientes los impactos de bala, era como si te tiraran piedritas al fuselaje; empiezo a transmitir mi señal "Q", informando que estamos recibiendo fuego antiaéreo, en ese momento se corta la transmisión, veo el pánico-controlado, en la cabina, mi visión es lateral, veo al ingeniero de vuelo y al co-piloto, son momentos de angustia, le pido a Dios que no me maten, de pronto un motor recibe un impacto y se siente el ronroneo de los motores, alguien dice fuego en el motor 4, abren el extinguidor, ponen el motor en bandera, en segundos la sabiduría, experiencia y sangre fría del Capitán Pérez Menéndez controla la situación y decide salir hacia el mar, alejarnos de esa zona, en ese momento un proyectil entra por el piso de la cabina detrás de mi asiento e impacta en el tablero eléctrico por dentro, no lo veo, pero sonó detrás de mi, me levanto y corto el suministro de electricidad del tablero, empecé a bajar cuanto switches estaban en On, entre esos estaban los de navegación, no hay electricidad. Secades le dice al capitán no tengo LORAN (sistema de navegación), oigo que el avión esta perdiendo gasolina, Pérez Menéndez y Leonardo Seda con la ayuda de Candido Sierra ingeniero de vuelo, han podido controlar el avión herido. El motor vuelve a coger fuego, es el del ala derecha y vuelven a activar el extinguidor del motor. Gracias a Dios Pérez Menéndez ha podido salir al mar y se aleja de Cuba. El le pide a Vicente Secades que calcule rumbo a Jamaica. **No podemos ir para ningún lado que no sea Jamaica, nuestros "aliados" nos habían advertido que nos entregarían a Cuba si aterrizábamos en Guantánamo.**

Pérez Menéndez había sido piloto de Cubana de Aviación, con mas de 20,000 horas de vuelo y gran sangre fría, ya había demostrado su serenidad, cuando haciendo una practica de dropping en Guatemala, había perdido parte de la punta del ala de un C-54, al rozar una montaña y tener que hacer un aterrizaje forzoso en la playa de Champerico, el avión reposaba en su orilla y lo veíamos cuando pasábamos volando por allí. El era amigo o conocido del Jefe de la Policía de Jamaica, de sus vuelos a Jamaica.

Mientras hacían los ajustes en la cabina, revisaban los danos y calculaban el combustible que había en los tanques. Me levante de mi asiento y les pedí a los PDO, que rezáramos un Padrenuestro dándole gracias a Dios, que no nos habían derribado. Todavía estábamos en peligro, pues se perdía gasolina y no se sabia porque, eso lo descubrimos al llegar a Jamaica, cuando nos bajamos por una cuerda del avión, había un hueco en el ala por donde salía un chorro de

gasolina, gracias a Dios la bala no fue una trazadora de fosforo, sino hubiéramos explotado en el aire.

La tranquilidad total llego cuando Pérez Menéndez informo que teníamos combustible para llegar a Jamaica a Montego Bay. No obstante para poder aterrizar Ramiro Sánchez Montesinos PDO (posteriormente herido en Girón, cuando desembarco con el personal de apoyo de la Fuerza Aérea de Liberación), tuvo que bajar por la escotilla situada detrás del ingeniero de vuelo y en forma manual bajar el tren de aterrizaje, pues no funcionaba el sistema hidráulico.

Pérez Menéndez sobrevoló la pista y el personal del aeropuerto ilumino la pista y aterrizamos en Montego Bay. Media hora antes de aterrizar se procedió a revisar el avión, no obstante los encargados de limpiar el avión antes del viaje no lo habían efectuado con el debido cuidado y nosotros tampoco. Por esa razón las autoridades de Jamaica descubrieron un panfleto de propaganda anti-Castro, y eso hecho por tierra, la historia que teníamos preparada de antemano. Nuestros asesores americanos antes de cada viaje nos daban una historia a ser utilizada en caso de un accidente, nos entregaban algunos dollars, pesos mexicanos, quetzales y pesos cubanos. El avión tenía huecos en el fuselaje por los impactos de las balas y la más peligrosa era la del ala por donde fluía la gasolina sobre la pista, eso hizo que el personal del aeropuerto buscara unos barriles vacíos y los colocaran bajo el salidero de la gasolina. Bajamos descolgándonos por una soga, dado que no había escalerilla y veíamos la gasolina saliendo y queríamos alejarnos lo más rápido del avión. Entramos en el aeropuerto y nuestra historia era que “volábamos un viaje de carga y al sobrevolar Cuba, nos habían disparado y tuvimos que aterrizar en Montego Bay”, esto fue en la madrugada.

Al amanecer nos vacunaron contra la viruela y posteriormente nos montaron en dos camioncitos y nos trasladaron a Kingston al cuartel de la policía. El capitán Pérez Menéndez conocía a Jack, Jefe de la Policía, de sus vuelos con Cubana de Aviación. El permitió el uso del teléfono para llamar a los números de Ciudad de Guatemala 23443 y 48975, los cuales irían acompañados de una contraseña “CHECK FOUR”. El resultado de esa llamada fue nulo, nadie atendió a ese teléfono en Guatemala. Por ende hay que agregar que nuestros asesores no nos daban armamento para defensa personal cuando viajábamos a Cuba, alegaban que si teníamos un aterrizaje forzoso en Cuba, el gobierno cubano diría que el gobierno americano estaba detrás de eso.

El Jefe de la Policía permitió que Fernando Puig llamara a su esposa Alelí Lorenzo a Miami y esta a su vez se comunico con Joaquín Sagenis, así es como la CIA se entero que estábamos vivos, nos daban por muertos. En la Base RAYO, Retalulheu. El P. Caveró, S.J. había celebrado una misa de difuntos. (Anos después en un Informe del Inspector General de la CIA, el escribió que gracias a su gente habían descubierto donde estábamos, algo completamente



falso, fuimos nosotros los que nos preocupamos para que ellos supieran donde estábamos).

El Jefe de la policía nos iba alojar en un Hotel, pero el Fiscal se negó y ordeno que nos trasladaran al Constabulary / Carcel, allí nos habilitaron un primer piso en la que había celdas, la puerta principal que comunicaba con estas celdas la mantenían abierta, eso si; nos advirtieron que pidiéramos que cerraran esa puerta por la noche para nuestra protección. Estando instalados se apareció el hijo del que fue dueño de la Textilera de Ariguanabo, conocido de Fernando Puig, el anoto nuestros nombres y fue a ver al Cónsul Americanos (Jamaica era colonia Inglesa a ese tiempo), a notificarle nuestra presencia y que nos sacaran de Jamaica, el cónsul le hizo ver que el no tenia nada que ver con eso. Este joven le informo que el estaba en capacidad de sacarnos de Jamaica por sus propios medios.

Estando allí en la cárcel se parecieron unos cubanos que estaban viviendo en Jamaica y se habían enterado de nuestra presencia, ellos querían irse con nosotros para los campamentos.

Todos estos acontecimientos se desarrollaron muy rápido, después de la visita de los cubanos. Regreso por la tarde el de la Textilera de Ariguanabo y dijo que había habido un cambio de aptitud por parte del Cónsul. Han pasado cincuenta dos anos de este viaje, si mal no recuerdo a Pérez Menéndez le informo su amigo que las autoridades estaban considerando darnos asilo político, en caso que los americanos no resolvieran. No hubo necesidad pues la CIA reacciono y coordinaron la salida de nosotros, tarde en la noche del segundo dia, nos notificaron de la salida de nosotros en la madrugada, que vendría un avión a recogernos.

En la madrugada nos trasladaron al aeropuerto de Kingston, al final de la pista esperamos en los vehículos a que apareciera el avión, a los 10 minutos aproximadamente aterrizo un C-46, el cual carreteo hasta el final de la pista, dio la vuelta para ponerse en posición de despegue, abrió la puerta, lanzo una escalerilla y nosotros fuimos pasando entre los hilos de la cerca de alambre de púas y corrimos hacia el C-46, trepamos al avión y con la misma cerraron la puerta y despegamos de Kingston, Jamaica.

En el avión venia de pasajero Howard Hunt, el cual en ese momento nos notifico que nos dirigíamos a Miami y procedió a entregarnos nuestras identidades falsas, las cuales se suponían que las tuviéramos con nosotros en Guatemala. A mi me dieron una licencia de conducir, la misma la guardo de recuerdo. No eran tan eficientes.

Cuando oímos que veníamos a Miami, nos pusimos muy contentos. En los días que estuvimos en la cárcel, habíamos hecho un pacto entre nosotros, el mismo

era quedarnos unos días en Miami, para así los miembros de la tripulación que eran casados estuvieran con sus familiares.

Aterrizamos en el Aeropuerto Internacional de Miami, serian las 10:00 AM, el avión fue al final de la pista donde había unos hangares. Al ratico llego un camioncito cerrado y nos trasladaron a Opalocka, sorpresa nuestra, al entrar en el almacén estaban allí un grupo de cubanos, con los cuales pasamos a identificarnos. Ellos eran el cuerpo de tanques, esa noche regresaban a Guatemala. Al momento nos reunimos y nos preparamos para cumplir nuestro acuerdo de quedarnos en Miami. Cuando apareció uno de los americanos, se le informo nuestra decisión, aquello fue "arde Troya", los americanos negados, sus argumentos eran que Fidel Castro iba a protestar que estábamos en Miami y no podíamos quedarnos aquí. Le pregunte: ¿Como Fidel sabe que estamos aquí? Silencio por respuesta, me dio tanta rabia esa contesta, le dije al americano quiero mi pasaporte, deseo irme para Venezuela con mi familia, ustedes son unos embarcadores. Me separe del grupo a rumiar mi bronca.

El americano se fue y como a la dos horas regreso con un acuerdo, nos dejaban quedarnos en Miami, pero no una semana, De acuerdo a como estuviera la situación política y la publicidad del incidente del avión en Jamaica y Cuba, tendríamos la posibilidad de prolongar nuestra estadía en Miami.

Los casados fueron llevados a ver a sus esposas y familia. A los solteros nos llevaron al Laudardale Biltmore Hotel en Fort Laudardale, al grupo nuestro se unió Alelí Lorenzo y su esposo Fernando Puig, los solteros éramos, Alberto Pérez, Salvador Miralles y yo. En total estuvimos solamente una noche aquí, al otro dia nos llevaron de regreso a Miami, hicimos escala en un Army Supply, me compre un mono de vuelo azul. Nos llevaron a una casa de seguridad donde fueron reuniendo a los integrantes de la tripulación, allí estaban si mal no recuerdo Howard Hunt, Joaquín Sagenis, después de las presentaciones protocolares uno de ellos me llevo aparte y me mostró una foto de pasaporte e inmediatamente identifique a la persona de la foto, era del Dr. Lino Bernabé Fernández, no se, que deseaban corroborar y porque me preguntaron si lo conocía.

Al rato de haber llegados sirvieron sandwich, conversamos un ratos entre nosotros, nos despedimos. Esta vez no nos transportaron en camiones cerrados. Pudimos entrar en el aeropuerto en forma normal. Allí estaban esperando los miembros de la Operación 40, esa noche saldríamos juntos para Guatemala.

Mi experiencia de este viaje fue, que nuestros aliados no eran confiables, pero por mucho que uno dijera lo que pensaba, era inútil, nadie creería a un muchacho de 17 años, siempre dirían, es un niño. Esto lo volví a comprobar cuando el 17 de Marzo, nos trasladaron a Antonino Díaz Pou y a mi a Estados Unidos y llevados a New Orleáns al campamento donde estaban, los hombres ranas, el 80% de los miembros de los teams de infiltración (se suponía que

todos estuvieran en Cuba) y el campamento de Nino Díaz, donde estaba uno de los radio-operadores del grupo nuestro que se había fugado de Guatemala.

Lo demás es historia, no estaba tan equivocado en mi forma de pensar sobre nuestros aliados. La cara la salvaron todos aquellos americanos, los cuales se involucraron en nuestra lucha voluntariamente, arriesgando sus vidas y carreras profesionales como Lt. Commander Harold "Quijote" Feeney, USN, Jack Modosset, USN William "Rip" Robertson, Grayston Lynch, ellos participaron en operaciones dentro de Cuba. Connie Seigrist aka Simpson, Doug Price, Billy J. Goodwin, Joseph L. Shannon, Dalton H. Livingston, Carl Sudano, Eldon Cross, Charles Hayden, James Vaughn, Robert H. Hofbuck, este grupo participo en operaciones aereas en Bahia de Cochinos. Y **Wade C. Gray, Riley W. Shamburger, Thomas W. Ray, Leo F. Baker** murieron en Playa Giron combatiendo.

Al rato de haber despegado en el C-46 de Kingston, Jamaica. El americano (Howard Hunt) que nos recibio en el avion, nos fue llamandonos y nos entrego los documentos falsos, que los mismos deberian estar desde hace tiempo en nuestro poder.

Este era mis 6 viaje a Cuba. A mi me entrego mi Cartera Dactilar de Chofer. La misma la guardo como recuerdo.

A.H.

Modelo CD-3

REPUBLICA DE CUBA  
CORPORACION NACIONAL DE TRANSPORTE  
CARTERA DACTILAR DEL CHOFER

Exp. No. C. D. N.º 319958  
Nombre Alejandro García Rodríguez  
Hijo de Alejandro y Ana María  
Natural de La Habana  
Nacionalidad Cubano  
Fecha de nacimiento 19 Marzo 1941 edad 18  
Vecino de Ave. 23 e/ A y B  
Municipio de Habana Provincia Habana  
Firma del interesado *Alejandro Garcia*

IZQUIERDO DEBIDO

NUMERO DEL GIRO POSTAL	ESTACION DE CORREOS	NUMERO CONSECUTIVO QUE LE CORRESPONDE EN LA RELACION DE INGRESO EN LA ZONA FISCAL DE ORIENTE
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**CERTIFICADO** Que el portador de esta C. D. no está comprendido en las incapacidades señaladas en las disposiciones legales vigentes y por ello se le autoriza para conducir los vehículos de motor registrados en Cuba, de acuerdo con el artículo 3 del D. P.º 4477 de 18 de Diciembre 1960, que establece que el permiso vige por un término de cinco años a partir de la fecha de su expedición entendiendo que después del primer año de vigencia el mismo puede prorrogarse por períodos anuales para conducir dichos vehículos, sin perjuicio de que esta prorroga sea decretada por acuerdo de la Autoridad judicial o administrativa que corresponda por hechos o antecedentes que sean de su conocimiento.

Habana, 8 de Enero de 1960  
Director General

Cuando los americanos y la tripulación llegaron a un acuerdo sobre estar en Miami unos días, procedieron a repartirnos en la ciudad. Los que eran casados fueron llevados a reunirse con sus esposas los solteros: Alberto Perez, Salvador Miralles y Vicente Blanco fuimos llevados a Fort Laudardale. Fernando Puig pidió estar con nosotros y fueron a buscarle a su esposa Aleli Lorenzo.

De esa época esta la Post-Card que mostramos aquí, la cual ha estado en mi poder desde Marzo 1961.

Nos llevaron al LAUDERDALE BILTMORE, en Fort- Laudardale, solamente estuvimos una noche, al otro día nos reunieron en la casa de seguridad de Coconut Grove y nos llevaron a Opalocka. Donde nos unieron al grupo de la Operación 40, los cuales viajaban a Guatemala.



# IF YOU LAND IN BASE OF GUANTANAMO WE WILL HAND YOU OVER

by VICENTE J. BLANCO CAPOTE #2503



# 2485 CAPITAN  
JOSE PEREZ MENENDEZ



# 2478 CO-PILOTO  
LEONARDO SEDA REYES



# 2201 ING. DE VUELO  
CANDIDO SIERRA REY



#2503 Radio-Operador  
VICENTE BLANCO CAPOTE



# 2459 Navegante  
VICENTE SECADES LOPEZ



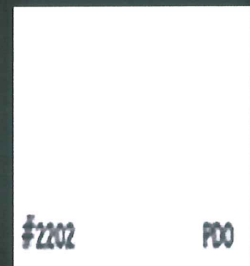
# 2414 PDO  
ALBERTO PEREZ MARTINEZ



# 2216 PDO  
FERNANDO PUIG COSSIO



# 2447 PDO  
RAMIRO SANCHEZ MONTESINOS



#2202 PDO  
SALVADOR MIRALLES POVEDA

## **If you land in Base of Guantanamo we will hand you over**

If you land in Guantanamo we will hand you over. Those were the words used by Billy Campbell, the Station Chief of Rayo Base, Retalhuleu, early on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 1961 in his office at the Control Tower.

We had been in isolation since the previous day in a room specially designed for that purpose in the Control Room building; we were completely isolated and were not allowed to communicate with anyone. Since I had been on previous trips I already knew the routine, but it was a novelty for some.

Whereas not all the members of the Liberation Air Force had had the opportunity to fly over Cuba, this was my 6<sup>th</sup> mission. I had been fortunate enough that, up to that point, my plane had never been fired at. Others had not been as lucky and had had their share of close calls

On the morning of March 5<sup>th</sup> we were taken right after breakfast to the Control Tower building for the final briefing. The plane would be a 4-engine C-54 Skymaster. Present during the briefing were the American logistic support personnel comprised by the person responsible for the flight plan, a security person, and the Station Chief.

Also present was the crew: Captain José Pérez Menéndez, the Co-pilot Leonardo Seda Reyes, the Flight Engineer Cándido Sierra Rey, the Navigator Vicente Secades López, the Radio-Operator Vicente Blanco Capote, and the PDO.s Ramiro Sánchez Montesinos, Salvador Miralles Poveda, Alberto Pérez Martínez, and Fernando Puig Cossío.

There was a big map of Cuba on a tripod. The map was covered with a transparent plastic film, which showed the intended route to Cuba with several letters of the alphabet, beginning with the letter A.... Upon receiving a signal from the pilot or the navigator I was supposed to transmit the corresponding letter to indicate our flight progress, and there was a similar line to mark the progress during their return trip.

In addition, we had a set of "Q" signals (a 3-letter code system beginning with the letter "Q") which served as shorthand for most of situations we were likely to encounter. For example, QSM meant We are being fired at and "QSP" meant We are changing direction of flight, among others. The mission target was in the Escambray Mountains near the city of

Cienfuegos, in the southern coast of Cuba. According to the information provided by the CIA there were three guerrilla groups in the area. They were surrounded and had urgent need of supplies.

All the instructions were recorded. Billy, the Station Chief provided us with the recording. It began with the name of each crew member and its individual responsibility, followed by an explanation of the flight plan, the mission objective, the number and capabilities of the enemy planes we could potentially encounter, the forecasted weather conditions, and any special warnings and instructions regarding any accidents or other circumstances that could impact our ability to return to base. The first warning was:

**YOU ARE NOT TO LAND IN THE US BASE OF GUANTANAMO UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. IF YOU DO, YOU WILL NOT BE PROTECTED. YOU WILL INSTEAD BE HANDED OVER TO THE CUBAN AUTHORITIES**

(This is corroborated in the documents declassified and released by the Pentagon after some sanitizing in 1998, Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Volume III: Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961, (pages 1-201). The actual prohibition can be found on the upper half of page 120, which reads: ***Agency agreed that all Cubans participating in over flight of Cuba.....***)

This con warning was the cover story, which was as follows:

**The fly carrying cargo under contract for Mr. Goudie. While flying, by mistake, over Cuban territory, we were fired upon.**

In connection with that cover story we were given two phone numbers 23443 and 48975 and password Clock Four. In Guatemala, which would be manned 24/7 in case of emergency?

In what would have been the center aisle of the plane there was a system of rails over which the pallets containing the cargo, the parachutes and the static line linkages were able to roll. The PDOs would open the doors and connect a small rail attachment that extended beyond the door. They would then remove the small ramps that kept the pallets in place.

The whole apparatus resembled a cargo train by now, and the PDOs watched the red lights, which would change to green lights to signal the



drop. Once the light changed from red to green the PDOs would give the cargo a push, the cargo would roll out the door and fall freely until the pull from the static line would cause the parachute to open.

We left RAYO base about 5:00 PM and climbed to 13,000 feet in order to clear the mountains that cover most of the area between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, then descended to about 8,000 feet, and then to about 2000 feet when over water until we got to the Cuban territorial limits, at which time we descended to about 800 feet above sea level while making any necessary course corrections to approach the Escambrai mountains from the right direction to reach the drop zones. Surprise was of paramount importance to protect the plane. The navigator, Vicente Secades, had previously given me the OK for me to transmit the letter indicating the approach to the drop zone, and now he was urging me to transmit the letter indicating the first of the three droppings of the night. The PDOs had just double checked the static line linkages and the alignment of the rails.

You could feel the tension in the air, and I was praying for no anti-aircraft fire. This was my 6<sup>th</sup> mission over Cuba (and never before received anti-aircraft fire), and the 4<sup>th</sup> to the Escambrai. A few weeks before I had come across a couple of steel plates that were on the floor of the supply room. I asked what they were and was told that they were part of the lateral armor of the cabin for a B26. They gave them to me as a present and I kept them to use them for protection on future missions over Cuba.

This was my second trip with the steel plates. When I first got in the plane I placed one of them under my seat and when Vicente Secades, the Navigator, saw what I was doing he asked me if he could use one of them, and I gave him the other one for him to use.

As we were approaching Cuba the Captain had reminded the crew to wear the harnesses and the auxiliary chute, which is worn on the chest. I also had a .45 caliber pistol that José Raffo had given me before leaving in December with the infiltration teams.

**(Note: The Americans did not allow us Cubans to have firearms with the exception of occasional guard duties, at which time we were allowed to use an M1 carbine with a 15 bullets magazine)**

As the first dropping started I had been four hours with the earphones

on, and my ears felt like they were about to melt from the heat, but I had to keep them on until after the dropping ended in case an order to abort the mission was received, which had happened to me before during a previous mission over the Sierra de los Organos in Pinar del Rio.

A PDO came suddenly running into the cabin to let the Captain know that one of the pieces of cargo had derailed and blocked the airplane door, so it was not possible to drop the rest of the cargo. Pérez Menéndez immediately changed course and headed out to the sea to give the PDOs time to fix the problem, and then we would return and resume the dropping, since we had been told that it was imperative for all three guerrilla groups to receive these supplies. They were in dire need.

When the PDOs were ready we headed back to Cuba. As we approached the coast line someone made the comment that the lighthouse had been turned off. We were flying overland when all of a sudden the sky was illuminated with the tracer bullets and we began to feel bullet impacts in the plane. As I started transmitting the .Q. signal that indicated the anti aircraft fire I could see the controlled panic in the cabin. With my lateral vision I could see the copilot and the flight engineer. These were moments of anguish, and I was asking God not to let them kill us when we received a direct impact on engine number 4. They got the extinguisher going and the Captain quickly feathered engine number 4. Within seconds the skill and experience of Captain Pérez Menéndez had stabilized the situation and headed out to sea.

It was at that moment that a projectile entered through the cabin floor right behind my seat and lodged itself in the inside of the electronics console. I could not see where because it was behind me. I got up and cut the power off and proceeded to turn OFF all the switches that were in the ON position. So we lost the radio and the navigation equipment. Secades (the navigator) informed the Captain that we had lost the LORAN and I heard someone say that we were losing gasoline. Pérez Menéndez and Leonardo Seda had been able to control the wounded airplane with help from Cándido Sierra. However, engine #4 was now on fire again, so they reopened the fire extinguisher. Thanks God Pérez Menéndez had been able to make it to the open water and was getting away from Cuba. He asked Vicente Secades to give him a heading for Jamaica, which was the only possible place to go since we had been warned by our allies that

They would turn us over to Castro if we were to land in Guantanamo.

Pérez Menéndez had been a pilot with Cubana de Aviación and had over 20,000 flight hours. He was cool and level headed under pressure, which he had already demonstrated in Guatemala. Once before, during a dropping exercise he had lost the wing tip of his C54 by flying too close to a mountain and was forced to make an emergency landing at the beach in Champerico. The plane was still resting near the coast and we could see it from the air every time we flew in the vicinity of Champerico. Since he had flown to Jamaica many times he was an acquaintance of the Jamaican Chief of Police.

While we were going over the emergency checklist we were also inspecting the damage and calculating the fuel we had left in the tanks, since we were losing fuel. I got up from my seat and asked the PDOs to join me in the Lord's Prayer thanking the Almighty for the fact that they did not shoot us down. We were still in danger, since we were losing fuel and we did not know why. It was not until after we landed in Jamaica that we saw the stream of gas that was flowing out of a hole in one of the wings. Thanks God it was not a (phosphorous) tracer bullet, otherwise the whole wing would have exploded in the air.

We felt at peace when Pérez Menéndez assured us that we had enough fuel to make it to Montego Bay. However, before landing, it was necessary for Ramiro Sánchez Montesinos PDO (who was later wounded in Giron when he landed with the Liberation Air Force Support personnel) to go down the bay behind the Flight Engineer and lower the landing gear by hand, since the hydraulic system was out of commission.

Upon arrival at Montego Bay Pérez Menéndez flew over the runway, the airport personnel turned ON the runway lights, and we landed. Half an hour before landing we had started sanitizing the plane, since neither the people in charge of cleaning it before the trip nor us had not done a good job. It was for that reason that the Jamaican authorities discovered a pamphlet of anti-Castro propaganda, which made our cover story difficult to believe.

**“On Wednesday March 8, 1961 The Miami Herald published a reports from Kingston, Jamaica, said a bullet-riddled DC4 aircraft with nine Cuban exiles aboard made a force landing at Montego Bay Airport. The plane was reported on its way from Guatemala to Tampa, Fla., but from antiCastro pamphlets found aboard it was deduced the aircraft had been engaged in a pamphlet raid on Cuba.”**

Our American allies always gave us a cover story to be used in case of an accident, as well as some Cuban pesos, Mexican pesos, and Guatemalan Quetzals. The plane had several holes in the fuselage from the impactes of the bullets, the most dangerous of which was the one on the wing, from which gas was flowing on the runway, which made the airport personnel put some empty barrels under the wing to capture the gas. Since we did not have a dropping stairway we descended from the plane using a rope, and we could see the gas flowing out, so we wanted to get as far away from the plane as possible and as soon as possible. As we entered the airport our story was that we were carrying some cargo and were shot at while overflying Cuba so we were forced to make an emergency landing at Montego Bay. By then it was almost baybreak. Shortly afterwards in the early morning we were vaccinated against smallpox and then we were put in a couple of small trucks that took us to the police station in Kingston. Pérez Menéndez knew Jack, the Chief of Police, from his previous flights to Jamaica as a Cubana de Aviación pilot.

The Chief allowed us to use the phone to call the phone numbers in Guatemala:

**23443 and 48975, which should be accompanied by a password CHECK FOUR.**

**The result of the call was negative, since nobody answered the phone in Guatemala.** I may add that our assessors did not allow us to carry weapons for personal defense when we flew over Cuba, under the excuse that, if we had to make an emergency landing in Cuba, having weapons with us would allow the Cuban government to allege that the US government was involved.”

The Police Chief allowed Fernando Puig to call his wife, Alelí Lorenzo, in Miami, and she passed the word about our predicament to Joaquín Sargenis. And that was how the CIA found out that we were alive, since they thought we were dead. Back at RAYO base in Retalhuleu, Father Caverro had already offered a Mass of the dead for our crew. (Years later in a report

from the CIA Inspector General, he stated that thanks to the CIA our whereabouts had been discovered, which was totally false, since it was at our own initiative that the word went out about our whereabouts and finally got to them)

The Police Chief was willing to let us go to a hotel but the district attorney demanded that we were put in the Constabulary (jail), and there we were put on the first floor, where there were several cells. They allowed us to keep the individual cell doors open, but we were advised to keep locked the general door that provided access to the floor for our own protection.

While we were at the Constabulary, the son of the former owner of the “Textilera Ariguanabo”, who was a friend of Fernando Puig, showed up in the place. He took our names and went to see the American Consul in Jamaica (Jamaica was a British colony at the time) to tell him about our presence and to ask him to get us out of Jamaica. The Consul answered that what he was asking was totally out of his jurisdiction, to which the young man replied that he would be able to get us out of Jamaica using his own resources.

While we were there several Cubans that were living in Jamaica and somehow found out about our presence there came to see us and indicated their desire to go with us to the training camps.

After the visit from the Cubans things started to move very rapidly. The young man returned that afternoon and told us that the American Consul had had a change of heart. If I remember correctly after fifty two years, the young man told Pérez Menéndez that the local authorities were considering granting us political asylum in case the Americans didn't come through.

This was not necessary, however, since the CIA finally reacted and coordinated our exit. Late in the afternoon of the second day we were told that a plane would pick us up early the following morning.

At the appointed time we were moved to just outside the Kingston airport, where we waited at the end of the runway while still in the vehicles. After about 10 minutes a C-46 landed, went to the end of the runway, turned around to be in a position ready to take off, opened the door, and extended a stairway for us to board. At that time we passed in between the barbed wires of the fence, ran to the

plane, and came on board. The stairways were retracted, the doors closed and we took off from Kingston, Jamaica.

There was a passenger in the plane by the name of Howard Hunt. He told us that we were headed toward Miami and preceded to hand each one of us sets of false identity papers (which we should have been given before leaving Guatemala). I managed to keep, and still have to this day as a souvenir, the driver's license I was given that day. If I had to rate them I would say that they were not very efficient.

We were very happy to hear that we were coming to Miami. While in jail in Jamaica we had made an agreement among us: to try to stay in Miami for a few days for those of us who were married to have a chance to see their families.

We landed at Miami International at about 10 AM. The plane went all the way to the end of the runway. There were two hangars nearby and we headed toward one of them and disembarked inside. A few minutes later a closed truck showed up and we were taken to Opa-Locka. To our surprise there was a group of Cubans there who belonged to the Tanks Battalion and was heading back to Guatemala that day.

Shortly after our arrival our group got together and decided to put into practice our agreement to stay in Miami, when one of the Americans showed up. When we informed him of our decision and he said that it was not possible the whole hell broke loose! – Their argument was that Fidel was going to protest about the fact that we were in Miami. - We asked them how in the hell Fidel knew that we were there. They did not have an answer to that question.

I was enraged about that answer, told them to go to hell, and that I wanted my real Passport back so that I could go to Venezuela to meet my family. You guys abandoned us, I said. I got away from the group, overtaken by feelings of animosity.

The American left and came back about two hours later with a counter proposal: We could stay in Miami, but not for a week. The length of our stay would depend on the degree of publicity and political impact of the Jamaica incident. Our stay could be prolonged if the circumstances would allow it. Those that were married were taken to see their families, and the ones that were singles were taken to the Lauderdale Biltmore Hotel in Ft. Lauderdale. Although married, Alelí Lorenzo and Fernando Puig stayed with us. The single ones were Alberto Pérez, Salvador Miralles, and I. We were only one night in the hotel. The next day, on our drive

back to Miami, we made a stop at an Army Supply, where I bought a blue flight suit. We were taken to a security house where all the crew eventually congregated.

I believe Howard Hunt and Joaquin Sagenis were there. After all the introductions called for, one of them took me aside and showed me a Passport photo and I was asked to verify its identity if I knew the person. I immediately recognized the photo: It was Dr. Lino Bernabé Fernández. After a while they brought some sandwiches, we had a chance to talk amongst us, and said goodbye. This time the trucks we boarded were not closed, and we entered the airport in a normal fashion. The men from the "Operation 40" were already there waiting. That night we all flew back to Guatemala together.

My experience from this trip was that our so called allies did not deserve our trust, but as much as I thought about it I did not think that anyone would take a 17 year old seriously. - My feelings were reinforced the 17th of March when Antonino Diaz Pou and I were brought back to the US and taken to New Orleans, where we visited the frog men and about 80% of the members of the Infiltration Teams (they were all supposed to be in Cuba by then). I was also able during that tour to visit Nino Diaz's camp, where one of our radio operators that had escaped Guatemala was located.

The rest is history. I was not too far off in my negative assessment of our allies. The honor of the USA was saved, in my opinion, by a handful of Americans that went the extra mile, and got themselves involved in what was our fight. They put their lives and their careers on the line.

This group included Lt. Commander Harold "Quijote" Feeney, and Lieutenant JG Jack "Pecos" Modessett, both from the US Navy, as well as William "Rip" Robertson, and Grayston Lynch. These four participated in ground operations inside of Cuba. In addition, the following ones participated in aerial operations during the Bay of Pigs landing: Connie Seigrist, aka Simpson, Doug Price, Billy J. Goodwin, Joseph L. Shannon, Dalton H. Livingston, Carl Sudano, Eldon Cross, Charles Hayden, James Vaughn, Robert H. Hofbuck, **Wade C. Gray, Riley W. Shamburger, Thomas W. Ray, Leo F. Baker.** These last four died in combat while fighting in the Cuban skies over the Bay of Pigs.