

DATE: 11-14-2017

**JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM  
IDENTIFICATION FORM**AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY: FBI  
RECORD NUMBER: 124-10220-10013  
RECORD SERIES: HO  
AGENCY FILE NUMBER: 2-2173-207

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR: FBI  
FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI  
TO: KISSINGER, HENRY A.  
TITLE:

DATE: 10/20/1976

PAGES: 5

SUBJECT: CUBANA AIRLINES FLIGHT 455, CRASHED, SUSP, GARCIA, JOSE VAZQUEZ,  
LUGO, FREDDY, OBA, ACA

DOCUMENT TYPE: PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT

ORIGINAL  
CLASSIFICATION: Secret

NEW  
CLASSIFICATION:

REVIEW DATE: 05/14/1998

UPDATE DATE:

STATUS Redact

RESTRICTIONS:

**JFK Act 6 (1)(B)**

**JFK Act 6 (4)**

COMMENTS:

DATE: 11-14-2017

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GMB 8/5/96 K 3/13/98

Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
The Secretary of State  
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In connection with the loss of Cubana Airlines Flight Number 455 on October 6, 1976, in the Caribbean Sea, and with specific regard to the fact that the name of Special Agent Joseph S. Leo of this Bureau, our Legal Attache (Legat) in Caracas, Venezuela, was found in the possession of one of the individuals suspected as being implicated in that disaster, the following recapitulation of information is set forth for your assistance.

On October 6, 1976, a Cuban operated DC-8 Aircraft, Cubana Airlines Flight Number 455, crashed into the sea some sixteen minutes after taking off from Seawell Airport, Barbados, en route to Kingston, Jamaica, and thereafter to Havana, Cuba. The pilot of the aircraft was monitored as stating that an explosion had occurred on board and he was then attempting to return to Barbados. There were no survivors of the crash. Following that incident, two Venezuelan citizens, Jose Vazquez Garcia and Freddy Lugo, were detained by Trinidad and Tobago authorities as suspects, in the possible sabotage of that aircraft. In the possession of Freddy Lugo was an address book which contained the following notation: "Embassy American 2846111-127 FBI Joseph Leo, 331511." *3/2/98*

A confidential source abroad who has reported reliable information in the past advised that Freddy Lugo is employed by Luis Posada, [the former head of the Venezuelan Counterintelligence Division, Directorate for the Service of Intelligence and Prevention (DISIP)]. Posada has been identified as a Cuban *(X)*

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exile who is known for his anti-Castro activities and who has reportedly assisted one Orlando Bosch Avila. The latter individual is a known terrorist who is the head of Coordinacion de Organizaciones Revolucionarias Unidas (Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations) (CORU). The confidential source referred to above has all but admitted that Posada and Bosch engineered the bombing of the Cubana Aircraft. The same source also reported he was almost certain that the government of Venezuela was privy to the activities of those individuals (S)

CORU was formed in June, 1976, by five anti-Castro terrorist groups at a meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. CORU is headed by Bosch and one Frank Castro, who has also been identified as an anti-Castro Cuban exile. Since that time, CORU has publicly accepted responsibility for numerous acts of terrorism, including murders and bombings.

#### Association of Legat, Caracas, with Suspects (S)(u)

Our Legat in Caracas became acquainted with Luis Posada [when Posada was employed by DISIP. After resigning from DISIP in 1973] Posada continued his contacts with Legat, Caracas, on few occasions, usually in connection with obtaining personal services involving visa requests. Posada referred his relatives and associates to Legat, Caracas, for visa information. On September 30, 1976, and again on October 1, 1976, Hernan Ricardo Lozano, one of Posada's employees, attempted to obtain a visa through Legat so that he could travel to San Juan, Puerto Rico. (S)

On October 8, 1976, the confidential source mentioned above reported that Jose Vazquez Garcia, one of the suspects arrested by Trinidad and Tobago authorities, is actually identical with Hernan Ricardo Lozano and that both Ricardo and Lugo were part of the support group in the sabotage operation directed against Cubana Airlines Flight Number 455. According to the same source, the bomb aboard the aircraft was supposed to explode prior to its takeoff from Barbados. (S)(u)

Legat, Caracas, advised that Ricardo Lozano became known to him in June, 1974, when Ricardo sought visa assistance [for a child of DISIP official]. Legat was led to believe that (S)

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Ricardo was an active member of DISIP. Subsequently, Legat became aware that Ricardo was an auxiliary member of DISIP and in the personal employ of Posada. Ricardo has also represented himself as a newspaper reporter and photographer affiliated with the magazine "Vision." (P)

Ricardo contacted Legat approximately four times after the initial visit and on two occasions furnished Legat with information on members of Cuban Embassy which was obviously obtained from DISIP files. (S)

On September 30, 1976, Ricardo appeared unannounced at the American Embassy and requested assistance in obtaining a visa to U. S. since he had a photographic assignment for "Vision" Magazine in Jamaica. He also planned a two-day stopover in Puerto Rico. Ricardo stated that he intended to leave on October 1, 1976, and since a travel agency told him the visa process would take three days, he requested Legat's assistance. (P) (S)

A review of Ricardo's passport disclosed that he traveled from Caracas to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, on August 29, 1976, and returned to Caracas, Venezuela, on September 1, 1976. Legat, Caracas, recalled that the bombing of the Guyanese Consulate in Port-of-Spain occurred at approximately 10:15 a.m., September 1, 1976. CORU has publicly claimed responsibility for that bombing. Legat, Caracas, informed the Chief, Nonimmigrant Visa Section (NIVS), American Embassy, that he wished no special consideration for Ricardo and specifically requested that the issuance of a visa to Ricardo be considered on its own merits.

On October 1, 1976, at the request of Ricardo, Legat communicated with a Vice Consul who wished to know if Legat believed Ricardo would return to Venezuela after his visit to the U. S., or if he was likely to remain there illegally. Legat informed the Vice Consul he had no reason to believe Ricardo would not return to Caracas. (P) (S)

On October 1, 1976, while conversing with an official of DISIP, Legat, Caracas, mentioned Ricardo and advised it was his suspicion that Ricardo might have been involved in some manner in the bombing of the Guyanese Consulate, Port-of-Spain, on September 1, 1976. The DISIP official responded that DISIP (S)

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had no reason to believe that Ricardo was the caliber of individual who would be utilized in such an operation and further, that Ricardo was not known to have been involved in such activities despite his association with Posada. (S)

On October 11, 1976, the Deputy Commissioner, Trinidad and Tobago Police, who has known Legat, Caracas, for several years, requested a meeting with Legat in Caracas for the purpose of discussing this matter. At that meeting, Legat, Caracas, recounted the details of his casual acquaintance with suspect Hernan Ricardo Lozano. The Deputy Commissioner then told Legat that suspect Freddy Lugo had informed Trinidad and Tobago Police Investigators that he, Lugo, had been told "by his boss" (Posada) to contact Legat, Caracas, if he encountered a visa problem. As has been mentioned herein, suspect Ricardo actually contacted Legat, Caracas, on September 30, 1976, and again on October 1, 1976, for visa assistance. (S) (M)

This matter is being followed most closely and you will be kept completely informed of all pertinent developments.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Clarence M. Kelley  
Clarence M. Kelley  
Director

- 1 - The Attorney General
- 1 - The Deputy Attorney General

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NOTE:

By memorandum J. G. Deegan to Mr. R. J. Gallagher, 10/12/76, details regarding the crash of Cubana airliner, the arrest of two Venezuelan citizens by the Trinidad and Tobago Police and of the fact that name of Legat, Caracas, was found in the possession of one of the arrested suspects were furnished. (S)(u)

On 10/11/76, an American Embassy Georgetown (Guyana) to Department of State (DOS) teletype reflected that the Guyanese Prime Minister, after returning from Barbados, reported that Cuba intended to "smear the U. S." with part of the blame for the crash. The Prime Minister said that the Trinidad and Tobago Police were suspicious of CIA involvement (initially believing Legat, Caracas, to be with CIA) and involvement of the U. S. Ambassador with Eric Sealy. Sealy is a Barbadian suspected of being involved in the aircraft sabotage and is apparently a friend of a U. S. Ambassador. The Prime Minister stated that the Cubans had seen the address book containing Legat's name. Details not known regarding Sealy's involvement with the U. S. Ambassador or with this case. (S)(u)

By teletype, 10/12/76, from Embassy Caracas to DOS and Embassy Georgetown, it was suggested that the Prime Minister be reminded by Embassy Georgetown that the Prime Minister knows Legat as do the Guyanese Police since Legat has briefed the Prime Minister on previous occasions. Also it was pointed out that Legat has no connection with CIA. (S)(u)

CIA has advised that a search of their files reflects no information regarding suspects Ricardo and Lugo. According to CIA, however, Luis Posada Carriles, former head of DISIP, is known to them. CIA described Posada as a "former Agent of the CIA" who was amicably terminated in July, 1967, but with whom contact was reestablished in October, 1967. According to CIA, after Posada lost his position with DISIP in 1974 due to a change in the Venezuelan Government, he was contacted only occasionally. The last contact with him was in June, 1976, when Posada unsuccessfully sought assistance regarding a visa problem. (S)(u)

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