

# **Cuban Pair Convicted of Spying Receive Federal Prison Sentences**

**The Miami Herald-January 5, 2002**

**Author: GAIL EPSTEIN NIEVES, gepstein@herald.com**

George and Marisol Gari, a former Miami couple who spied for Cuba in the 1990s as members of the now-dismantled "Wasp Network," were sentenced Friday to federal prison terms - seven years for him and 3 1/2 years for her.

The Garis stood in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge Ursula Ungaro-Benages to apologize and accept responsibility for their crimes. That was in stark contrast to the defiant, prescribed, anti-United States diatribes delivered by five Cuban spies sentenced last month.

"Unlike the five who were just sentenced, these two spoke more from the heart," Assistant U.S. Attorney David Buckner said after the hearing. "To the end the others denied responsibility, the Garis, they did accept responsibility."

Marisol Gari pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent for Cuba. George pleaded guilty to one count of acting as an unregistered agent for Cuba.

The Garis were arrested in August in Orlando, where they had moved about 18 months earlier after living in Hialeah and the Doral area for about eight years. They pleaded guilty in September.

In Orlando, George Gari worked as a machine tester at Lockheed-Martin, and Marisol Gari worked as a gas station cashier.

Prosecutors said that as agents for the Cuban Directorate of Intelligence, the couple assisted from 1991 to 1998 in two primary spying goals: trying to infiltrate West Miami-Dade County's Southern Command headquarters and to penetrate the Cuban American National Foundation, a prominent exile group.

Marisol Gari also used her former job at the U.S. Postal Service's Miami International Airport distribution center to compile a report on various U.S. mail systems for her Cuban bosses.

The couple belonged to Cuba's La Red Avispa, or Wasp Network, which the FBI busted in September 1998. Five high-ranking intelligence officers from the group were convicted on federal spy-related charges in June. Last month, they received sentences ranging from 15 years to life.

'YEAR OF PRISONERS'

The five imprisoned men - Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, René González and Fernando González - are considered heroes in Cuba. On Saturday, Cuban leader Fidel Castro said that because of their importance, 2002 would be officially known as the "Year of the Heroic Prisoners of the Empire."

Louis Casuso, lawyer for Marisol Gari, made reference to those men and their relative importance to the case as he urged the judge to impose a light sentence. Casuso said his client was a minor player by comparison to the others.

"These people are not getting awards from Fidel Castro," Casuso said, referring to the Garis. "Castro is not making any speeches about Marisol Gari. She's sorry for what she did and sorry she got involved in this situation and she feels terrible."

Prosecutors had sought four years in prison for Marisol Gari and seven years for the husband. Ungaro-Benages shaved five months off the term for Marisol. She also ordered both Garis to serve three years of supervised release after they finish their prison time.

#### NOT A CITIZEN

Marisol Gari could be eligible for deportation afterward because she is not a U.S. citizen, but prosecutors said she could apply for political asylum.

George Gari, who was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and later moved with his family to Cuba, is a U.S. citizen.

The Garis have two children living with relatives. A third child is in the Army.

George Gari told the judge that his handlers had told him to get a job as a local police officer, which he never obtained.

Elizabeth Delgado, lawyer for George Gari, did not return phone calls.

Edition: Final  
Section: Local  
Page: 5B

Record Number: 0201080018  
Copyright (c) 2002 The Miami Herald

[http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aggdocs/NewsBank/0F0EB05058788265/0F01011B0D7111CF?p\\_multi=MIHB](http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aggdocs/NewsBank/0F0EB05058788265/0F01011B0D7111CF?p_multi=MIHB)