

FBI Agent Outlines Moves, Tools Of Accused Cuban Spies

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What does a suspected spy do to blend into the crowd? Act like you and me - but use a fake name.

FBI agent Joseph Hall, on the witness stand Wednesday for his second day in the Cuban spy trial, testified in exhausting detail about ID cards and other items confiscated from the Hollywood studio apartment of defendants Ruben Campa and Luis Medina.

Sam's Club. Blockbuster. AAA. You name it, they signed up, according to membership cards shown to jurors in federal court Wednesday.

The names Campa and Medina were fake, appropriated from death certificates of babies who died in California in the late 1960s, both sides agree. The men used the stolen identities to get everything from driver's licenses to Social Security cards, Hall testified.

Medina - real name Ramon Lavanino - even got a U.S. passport and registered with the Selective Service under his assumed identity. He's a Cuban citizen, not an American. His attorney, Bill Norris, described him in opening statements as a Cuban who is "proud of his country . . . and committed to defending it."

Campa's real name is Fernando Gonzalez. The FBI found some 31 death certificates among his belongings, Hall testified.

Prosecutors allege that Campa and Medina were Cuban intelligence operatives using false identities and fake life stories to give them cover while in the United States.

Medina had paperwork showing he was a shoe salesman, Hall testified. Campa had a business card identifying him as a desktop publisher.

The five defendants on trial before U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard were arrested Sept. 12, 1998, and charged with acting as unregistered agents of Cuba. Prosecutors also have accused Medina, Gerardo Hernandez and Antonio Guerrero of penetrating U.S. military installations in a bid to pass defense secrets to Havana.

The man accused of being the ringleader, Hernandez, faces the most-serious charge: conspiracy to commit murder in the deaths of four Brothers to the Rescue fliers who were shot down by Cuban MiGs in 1996. Charged in other counts is Rene Gonzalez.

Defense attorneys acknowledge their clients were working for Cuba. But they insist that the alleged spies did not pass classified information to their bosses or do anything to harm the United States.

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