

# **FBI Agent Details Cuba Spy Evidence**

**By Catherine Wilson**

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MIAMI (AP) -- The shadowy world of a low-budget Cuban spy ring came to light in a courtroom, where an FBI agent testified that a suspect's apartment yielded computer diskettes containing coded references to Fidel Castro and plans to sabotage an aircraft hangar.

Sounding more and more like a spy novel, details of the group's workings were revealed in a hearing at which Luis Medina and Manuel Viramontez were ordered held without bail Wednesday.

Thousands of pages of encrypted computer documents were seized from the men's apartments.

The men were among 10 rounded up over the weekend and charged Monday with trying to penetrate U.S. military bases, infiltrate anti-Castro exile groups and manipulate U.S. media and political organizations. Prosecutors said it was the biggest Cuban spy ring uncovered in the United States since Castro took power in 1959.

However, the Pentagon said none of the alleged spies obtained U.S. secrets.

Evidence seized from Viramontez "analyzes the ability to sabotage or cause damage to airplanes" or a Florida hangar itself," FBI agent Mark de Almeida testified.

But the network was a low-budget affair, with a Cuban military captain who lived under the alias Viramontez falling behind on his rent.

The Cuban government "indicated they were supposed to suffer like the rest of the Cuban people," de Almeida testified in explaining their spartan lifestyle.

He said diskettes seized from Viramontez' apartment were sprinkled with the word "comrade" and coded references to "commandante," taken by investigators to refer to Castro.

Before Viramontez was caught, he had three sets of false identities and plans to escape to Mexico, Nicaragua or Canada, prosecutors allege. Medina, said to be a Cuban intelligence major, was ready to flee with a briefcase containing Puerto Rican identities, a fake birth certificate and \$5,000 in cash.

Eight defendants postponed their bail hearings Wednesday. All 10 were in solitary confinement at a federal jail.

Viramontez's attorney Paul McKenna said the court, not public opinion, must decide the case.

"You can't have a lynch mob mentality about this case," said McKenna. "We have to let our system of justice, our courts, deal with this."

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