

## **Accused Spy called Patriot**

*Translated from original Spanish*

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**WILFREDO CANCIO ISLA**

The alleged Cuban spy Fernando Gonzalez – whose alias is Ruben Campa – was described yesterday by a defense attorney as a patriot who was trying to prevent attacks by anti-Castro groups, against citizens and tourists on the island.

During the second day of final arguments in the trial of five accused of espionage in a federal court in Miami, the lawyer Joaquin Mendez assured that his client didn't intend to undermine the national security of the United States, nor did he act with a "criminal mind."

"Fernando Gonzalez wasn't trying to attack anyone here or subvert our system of government, but rather was trying to save his country" Mendez affirmed, the first of the defense attorneys to deliver their conclusion.

In his intervention, the attorney said that his clients' task – as member of the Wasp Network - was necessary to protect Cuban citizens from "attempts of extremist" groups that, from Miami, "seek to unleash a war against Cuba."

Fernando Gonzalez is accused of acting as an agent of the Cuban government and could face up to 10 years in prison. Gerardo Hernandez, facing maximum charges of espionage and conspiracy in the murder of four pilots in 1996, could be sentenced to life in prison.

Mendez referred to eight bombings in 1997 that took place in hotels and tourist facilities on the island, indicating that "the 40 years of attack, bombs and weapons smuggling perpetrated by groups from Miami" justified the presence of Cuban agents in this city.

Displaying photographs of the attacks in Cuba, the lawyer castigated organizations like Alpha 66 and Commandos F-4, describing some of the exiled activists as "dangerous crazy extremists."

"He's a lunatic" exclaimed Mendez in reference to Rodolfo Frometa, self appointed commander of the Commandos F-4, after describing Jose Basulto, president of Brothers to the Rescue, as a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing.

"Basulto's aim is to start a war between Cuba and the United States" he said. "He wants your and my children to go to war, and then reap the dividends."

Mendez's arguments were preceded by the prosecuting attorney Caroline Heck Miller, who emphasized before the 12 members of the jury that the defendants' mission was to infiltrate American military installations, to obtain secret information for the benefit of a country that considers the United States its primary enemy.

Miller said that Gerardo Hernandez received specific instructions from Havana, for the undercover agents not to fly in Brother to the Rescue Cessnas in the days prior to the attack by Cuban MiG's, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1996.

"The Cuban government had been confronted by the actions of Brothers to the Rescue, but that doesn't justify the premeditated murder of four people" said the prosecutor, who urged the jury not to allow itself to be led by the "propaganda skirmishes" of the Cuban regime.

The defense arguments continue today. The attorney Paul McKenna, representing Hernandez, is due to speak on Friday.

The jury's deliberations begin on Monday, almost six months after the process commenced.

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