

# Castro Fears a Fate Like Pinochet's

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The security forces that protect Fidel Castro have orders to act using all available resources, including the use of heavy weapons, if there is any attempt to arrest the Cuban ruler outside Cuba, as occurred with former Chilean general Augusto Pinochet in London, a former Cuban Interior Ministry official who deserted in the Dominican Republic revealed on Tuesday in Miami.

In his first appearance since his April 17 desertion, Captain Lázaro Betancourt Morán, 37, said that ever since Pinochet was arrested "there is a latent fear" that the same could happen with Castro on one of his trips abroad.

Furthermore, he pointed out that in the face of any attempt or arrest based on a judicial order, Castro's bodyguards had been given the order to defy the police forces in any country where such an incident might occur.

Flanked by directors from the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Betancourt appeared before the press on Tuesday. According to his statements, he was wearing the same suit he wore when he escaped in Santo Domingo, where Castro was attending a Caribbean summit.

"The Cuban government considers the CANF to be its worst enemy, and responsible for terrorist activities," said Betancourt, who supposedly accompanied Castro on seven official visits to Venezuela, South Africa, Brazil and Italy.

CANF's president, Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, stated that Betancourt may provide valuable information to help try the Cuban government in criminal court, in relation to the Brothers to the Rescue pilots downed by Cuba in 1996.

"It is the first time that a person close to Castro can give us such useful information in order to achieve an indictment," said Hernández.

Betancourt confirmed what might be the basis for a trial against Castro: "The downing of the aircraft did not come from the intermediate level; it was a decision by the head of state."

In a well-attended press conference that lasted two hours, Betancourt related the motives that led him to make the decision to desert and seek protection in the U.S. embassy in Santo Domingo.

"It was a combination of disappointments, both as a member of the military and as a human being," declared Captain Betancourt, who mentioned that he had been personally disturbed by the sinking of the "13 de marzo" tugboat on Havana's coastline in 1994.

The Cuban captain was subjected to questioning in Washington by agents from the CIA, FBI and Pentagon.

But the element that was most questioned in his story on Tuesday was a recent visit he made to the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., concerned for the fate of his family remaining in Cuba: his wife, a nine-year-old son and a brother.

"Fifteen days ago I went [to the Interests Section] to find out if they would let my family leave, on the basis that many associates doubted my desertion," he explained.

According to Betancourt's story, he used the pretext that he was going to infiltrate the CANF. "It worked and I was lucky to get out of there alive," he commented.

Asked if he didn't fear being considered in Spain as another Juan Pablo Roque, who penetrated Brothers to the Rescue, Betancourt responded, "No, obviously not, because I am speaking from the heart and I have told everything to the competent authorities in this country."

Former officer Carlos Cajaraville, who worked for 20 years in Cuban counter-intelligence, considered Betancourt's story to be believable.

"I can believe that he would risk calling for his family there and that the Interests Section might have thought that it was some kind of provocation," said Cajaraville, who resides in Miami.

Caption: Photo: Lázaro Betancourt Morán (a)

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