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Guevara's African Venture A Disaster, Senators Told

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Ernesto (Che) Guevara's guerrilla operation in Africa was nearly as bad as the disaster he suffered in Bolivia, a former Castro Cuban intelligence officer told the Senate Internal Security subcommittee in testimony released today.

The witness, Orlando Castro Hidalgo, told the subcommittee his "cover" job before he defected to the United States was as protocol officer at the Cuban Embassy in Paris but he actually was an agent of the DGI, Cuba's spy and guerrilla organization.

The Cuban soldiers in Africa (the Congo) had expected to find a revolutionary atmosphere but discovered that intertribal rivalries were far more important than revolution, Castro told the subcommittee.

He said the Cubans left Africa fearing their friends almost as much as their enemies.

Met Death in Bolivia

Guevara, he said, went directly from Africa to Bolivia where he met his death. The Cuban venture in Africa was only a

little better than the Bolivian fiasco because most of the Cubans got out of Africa alive, he said.

Castro took asylum at the U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg on March 31, 1969. The testimony released today was given to the Senate on Oct. 16.

The defecting agent said the Russians were critical of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro for sending troops to Africa, accusing him of adventurism.

He told the Senate subcommittee that all Cuban ambassadors in Africa and most other Cuban officials there are members of the DGI under Ministry of Foreign Relations cover.

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Castro Hidalgo said his real job in Paris was to support revolutionary activities in Latin American nations by providing money and visas to Latin trainees en route to Havana and by developing contacts among French and Latin citizens.

Blackmail Used

There were DGI agents in 13 Latin embassies in Paris, he said. Before taking the Paris assignment, Castro said he was in the DGI section operating against Cuban exiles in the United States.

"The DGI almost without exception uses only blackmail to recruit agents in Cuban exile groups in the United States," Castro testified. "Important Cuban exiles are reviewed from the standpoint of their relatives still in Cuba. The prospective agent is then approached on the basis of helping the relative in Cuba.

"If the agent accepts, the relative doesn't go to jail, or is released from jail, or is permitted to leave Cuba as an exile, depending on the particular case."

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