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SUBJECT "The Cuban Connection"

ROGER MUDD: It is widely believed that the Cuban government deliberately emptied its jails onto the shores of Florida. And in tonight's "Special Segment" on the Cuban connection, Brian Ross has evidence the Castro government is also allowing and encouraging a multibillion dollar drug traffic into Florida.

BRIAN ROSS: The Church of San Ambrosio in a wealthy suburb of Bogota, Colombia. Two years ago, a baby girl was christened in this church. The baby's father, Johnny Crump, a very successful narcotics smuggler in Colombia. And the baby's godfather, Ambassador Fernando Rovello, the Ambassador to Colombia from Cuba.

Now this picture and the close relationship between a narcotics smuggler and the Cuban Ambassador is of great interest to the United States government. Federal law enforcement authorities say they have evidence that Ambassador Rovello, until the closing of the Cuban Embassy in Bogota in 1980, was not only Fidel Castro's man in Colombia, but also Castro's man in the narcotics business.

For the last two years, according to federal authorities, the Castro government, in deals worked out by its former ambassador in Bogota, has allowed certain Colombian drug smugglers who have paid up to \$500,000 a boat to operate inside Cuban territorial waters, a safe haven from American ships and planes patrolling the Caribbean and just a few hours from Florida by speed boat.

JOHNNY CRUMP: I was in Cuba at the time that the boat

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arrived....

ROSS: Johnny Crump, the Colombian narcotics smuggler, says he was able to run his drugs through Cuba until early this year when he was caught in a cocaine deal in Miami. Now, to stay out of prison, Crump is providing federal authorities with details of his meetings and alleged drug dealings with Cuban government officials in Bogota and Havana.

CRUMP: They use that as a way to hurt the United States.

ROSS: By helping you as a drug smuggler.

CRUMP: Yeah. Right.

ROSS: And the small boats could come to the mother ship inside Cuban waters?

CRUMP: Inside Cuban waters. They motorize from the mother ship and then go smuggle....

ROSS: Back to the United States.

CRUMP: ...to the United States....

ROSS: Crump says the Cubans knew which drug boats were his, because each of his boats used the code name Vivianna, the name of his baby daughter, whose godfather was the Cuban Ambassador.

For the last three months at the Federal Courthouse in Miami, a grand jury has been hearing testimony about the alleged secret deals between Colombian drug smugglers and the Castro government. NBC News has learned that top officials of the Justice Department now believe that there is enough evidence to take the unusual step of asking for indictments against Cuban government officials, including Ambassador Rovello, on drug smuggling charges, even though it is unlikely that any of the Cuban officials could ever be brought to trial.

And federal authorities also say there's evidence that Cuban government intelligence service has been operating its own drug ring and that this man, a former sergeant in Cuban intelligence who has now defected, has admitted he was assigned to run cocaine and other drugs from Havana to Miami. On a flight out of the Bahamas, he showed us the route he took. At one point, he spotted a beached boat he says he was forced to abandon during one drug run. He took us to a remote drug smugglers' air strip where the wreckage of three planes was still on the ground. He says he operated as a spy and a drug dealer for the DGI, the

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Cuban equivalent of the CIA.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN [Translated]: Cuban intelligence ordered me to transport to Miami cocaine, for the first time on a fast boat to the border. I brought 60 kilos of cocaine to Miami.

VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH: We're concerned about Cuba's role in this.

ROSS: Vice President George Bush, who helped to set up a big federal drug task force in Florida, says whether it's for economic reasons or whatever reasons, there is little doubt Cuba has gone into the drug business.

VICE PRESIDENT BUSH: And I can't go into everything we might be trying to do about it. But I think there has been hard evidence that the kind of problem you mentioned exists.

ROSS: That Cuba has served as a base for some drug dealers?

VICE PRESIDENT BUSH: That there is -- that there is an involvement of Cuba in the -- in the overall drug problem.

ROSS: This country is now spending a lot of money to stop drugs from being smuggled into Florida. But even with it all, federal authorities say those smugglers with connections in Havana are often beyond the reach of American law.

Brian Ross, NBC News, Miami.

MUDD: The Cuban government in Havana indicated to NBC News it would have no comment on the Brian Ross report.