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Miami drug smuggler ran guns for Castro to guerrillas, agents say

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A Miami drug trafficker has smuggled arms to leftist guerrillas in Colombia and received assistance from the Castro government in Cuba, according to federal agents and Dade police.

If their information is accurate, the case could establish for the first time a Cuban link between drug smuggling into the United States and revolution in South America.

U.S. Attorney Atlee Wampler III said Saturday, "This is the first time that I can remember that material like that would come out in open judicial proceedings — and it will."

Castro's brother, Raul, met secretly with the drug trafficker last year, according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration sources, and a deal was struck:

The smuggler's narcotics ships would have access to Cuban ports for refueling, repairing and evading the U.S. Coast Guard. In exchange, he would run weapons and munitions to the leftist guerrilla M-19 movement in Colombia.

The DEA identified the smuggler as Jaime Guillot Lara, 35, a "major drug trafficker." Investigators say he wanted to be the next prime minister of Colombia.

Last month Guillot was jailed in Mexico City. This month he was indicted on marijuana conspiracy charges by a federal grand jury in Miami.

Two weeks ago he tried to kill himself, slashing his wrists in his jail cell. Mexican officials say he is recovering.

The CIA questioned Guillot in Mexico recently. The agency was said to be particularly interested in reports of Guillot's ties with Castro government and the M-19 movement.

Myles Frechette, director of the U.S. State Department's Cuban Affairs office, acknowledged Saturday that he had heard rumors of a man in jail who was linked to drug traffic, Cuba and the M-19 guerrillas. But he had not seen any official reports, he said.

DEA officials say their narcotics investigation began routinely last year, without any political implications, and "suddenly it began to shock everyone."

"It's significant," said John McCutcheon, DEA supervisor for the Fort Lauderdale area. "This is the first time we have had a major supplier of drugs, now indicted, who is definitely involved with an outfit such as the M-19."

Guillot, who owns a walled \$300,000 home in Miami on Sunset Drive, is a fugitive from Miami and his native Colombia, where he owns a development of 2,000 homes near Barranquilla.

Guillot was arrested on murder charges in Barranquilla in September 1976, police said, and in Mexico for fraud in 1978. The disposition of the charges was unknown.

Police said one of Guillot's marijuana ships, the Margot, was seized by the Colombian army in October 1977. The Colombians also seized 14 tons of marijuana in February 1979 from Guillot and 30 more tons 11 days later, they said.

In early 1981 Guillot was kidnapped in Miami by other drug dealers. He survived the ordeal. Metro-Dade police did not find out about it until Coral Gables police discovered his baby-blue Mercedes Benz 450 SL riddled by bullets and submerged in a canal.

The Cuban connection apparently developed about a year ago, investigators say, when a Colombian drug trafficker, Johnny Crump, introduced Guillot to a Cuban diplomat. The diplomat, Gonzalo Bezol, was accompanied by his "chauffeur," who is a former chief of demolition for Cuban forces in Angola, according to intelligence sources.

Customs agents assisted by the DEA arrested Crump at the Omni Hotel in Miami a week ago on narcotics trafficking charges.

His bond is set at \$3 million. He was in possession of documents linking him to Cuban officials — including their home numbers in Cuba — police said.

Guillot, Bezol and the "chauffeur" went to Nicaragua last year, where they met with Raul Castro, Cuba's Armed Forces Minister, the DEA said.

Soon afterward a vessel owned by Guillot delivered 200 tons of weapons to the guerrillas, federal agents said.

Two other of Guillot's ships, loaded with marijuana, were seized off the Virginia coast and in Tampa.

In November, one of Guillot's vessels, the Monarcha, rendezvoused twice at sea with a weapons-laden ship called the Karina, taking on loads of guns and munitions, investigators say. A stolen Aeropesca airliner was used to transport one load of guns to an airstrip on a farm in the Colombian interior, they said.

The Colombian Navy caught and sank the Karina 10 miles off the coast. Members of the crew were captured or killed.

Colombian armed forces seized the Monarcha, and Guillot fled to Mexico City, investigators said.

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