

Wanted for jetliner bombing

Bush silent as top terrorist seeks US asylum

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“If you harbor terrorists, you are a terrorist,” were the words used by President George W. Bush in justifying the invasion of Afghanistan three-and-a-half years ago and launching the campaign of worldwide militarism known as the global war on terror.

But the Bush administration is itself harboring a notorious terrorist, wanted for the mid-flight bombing of a Cuban civilian airliner as well as other deadly attacks on civilian targets and attempted assassinations.

The terrorist in question is Luis Posada Carriles, a CIA-trained Cuban exile who slipped quietly across the US-Mexican border last month and is now formally applying for political asylum in the United States.

While Posada Carriles entered the country illegally, his presence here has hardly been a secret. His supporters in the extreme right-wing anti-Castroite exile circles in Miami’s Little Havana have launched fund-raising efforts on his behalf, and his lawyer held a press conference Wednesday formally announcing his bid for asylum.

Yet the Bush administration, in the face of demands from the governments of both Cuba and Venezuela for Posada Carriles’s extradition to face charges of international terrorism and murder, has remained totally silent. It has made no move to take the terrorist into custody and is, in every sense of the word, harboring him. Apparently, he has spent the past two weeks negotiating his status with US immigration officials and the Department of Homeland Security.

Cuban President Fidel Castro announced on Monday that his government has demanded the arrest of Posada Carriles and his extradition to face terrorist charges in Cuba. He delivered a stinging speech in Havana, denouncing the Bush administration for “hypocrisy” and comparing Posada Carriles to Osama bin Laden.

The Cuban President spoke before an audience that

included survivors and relatives of victims of a series of US-backed terrorist attacks dating back to the early 1960s and including the 1976 airline bombing. Also present was the father of Fabio Di Celmo, the young Italian tourist killed in the wave of bombings of hotels and other tourist areas organized by Posada Carriles in Havana in 1997.

“Listen well, Mr. Bush,” declared Castro. “Here are the victims of the crimes and terrorist acts committed against our people going back dozens of years. It is in their name that I am speaking.”

Posada Carriles is still considered a fugitive from justice in Venezuela, where he escaped from prison after being sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for having organized the 1976 terrorist bombing of a Cuban civilian airliner flying from Bermuda to Venezuela. All 73 people aboard were killed. Stating that Venezuela was stepping up its demands for extradition, Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel told the press, “I hope Mr. Bush will take note of his own anti-terrorism policies and hand over Posada Carriles.”

In the bid for political asylum, the lawyer for the terrorist said he intends to argue that his client faces political persecution if he is returned to Cuba and that he carried out his crimes in collaboration “directly or indirectly” with the US Central Intelligence Agency.

Posada Carriles’s involvement in terrorism spans over four decades. After going into exile to oppose the Cuban Revolution of 1959, he was trained in the use of explosives by the CIA in preparation for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. He subsequently underwent military training in the US Army’s officer candidate school.

He was implicated in the 1976 Washington, DC assassination of former Chilean government minister Orlando Letelier, a prominent opponent of the Pinochet

dictatorship who died in a car bombing together with his American associate Ronni Moffit. At the time, Venezuelan police found maps and other evidence at Posada Carriles's home in that country tying him to the terrorist killings.

After his escape from prison in Venezuela in 1985, he made his way to El Salvador, where he played a key role in the illegal operation organized by the Reagan administration to fund and arm the contra terrorists attacking Nicaragua.

In 1998, he admitted to the *New York Times* that he was responsible for organizing a string of bombings of Cuban hotels, department stores and other civilian targets the previous year, having hired a group of Central American mercenaries to do the dirty work. The bombings killed one person and wounded 11 others.

At the time, Posada Carriles said that his terrorist activities were funded by the Cuban American National Foundation, the powerful exile group that both the Democrats and Republicans have courted and awarded government funding.

Posada Carriles is responsible for several attempts to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro. The most recent was uncovered by Cuban intelligence in Panama in 2000, where he directed a plot to bomb a speech by Castro during the Ibero-American summit.

He was arrested together with three other Cuban exiles. One of his co-conspirators was Guillermo Novo, who was tried, convicted and then released on a technicality in connection with the 1976 Letelier assassination. The other two were implicated in assassinations of Cuban diplomats and others targeted by the anti-Castro terrorist groups.

Despite overwhelming evidence that the four intended to bomb a crowded lecture hall, a crime that would have produced massive casualties, the right-wing government in Panama tried the four only on lesser charges. Then, in August 2004, just days before she left office, Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso pardoned them, in response to US pressure and in return for \$4 million from Cuban exile groups in Miami.

In timing that seemed to be more than coincidence, the pardon came on the eve of a major campaign rally for George W. Bush in Miami, where the Republican president refused to condemn the release of the four

convicted terrorists.

Posada Carriles's three co-conspirators all had US citizenship. Allowed back into the US with no questions asked, they were greeted as heroes by the right-wing exile groups. While not a citizen, Posada Carriles was supplied with a false American passport by the US embassy and made his way to Honduras and then El Salvador, where he apparently had powerful protectors.

There is no reason to believe that Posada Carriles would have returned to the US without a signal from top government officials that they intend to protect him and continue supporting the terrorist activities that he has directed over the past four decades.

If it were to adopt policies analogous to those utilized by the Bush administration in its so-called global war on terror, the Cuban government would be entitled to send special forces into Miami to either kidnap or assassinate Posada Carriles, or even launch a military attack on Washington.

That such a scenario seems farfetched only underscores the fraud of the US war on terrorism itself. While using the supposed threat of terrorism as a pretext for carrying out global military aggression and a means of stampeding the American people into accepting war and social reaction, the US government remains the greatest purveyor of state-sponsored terrorism on the face of the earth. That is why a monstrous killer like Posada Carriles feels safe coming in from the cold.



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