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On June 4, 2009, Walter Kendall Myers and his wife, Gwendolyn Steingraber Myers, were arrested by the FBI and charged with spying for the government of Cuba. According to court documents filed in the case, the Myers allegedly were recruited by the Cuban intelligence service in 1979 and worked for them as agents until 2007. On June 10, 2009, a U.S. Magistrate Judge ruled that the couple posed a flight risk and ordered them held without bond.

The criminal complaint filed by the FBI in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on June 4 and the grand jury indictment returned in the case have been released to the public, and these two documents provide a fascinating and detailed historical account of the activities of Kendall and Gwendolyn Myers. Perhaps more importantly, however, these documents provide an excellent opportunity to understand how the Cuban intelligence service works and serve as a primer on Cuba's espionage efforts inside the United States.

Case Details

According to the criminal complaint filed by the FBI, Kendall Myers served from 1959 to 1962 in the U.S. Army Security Agency (ASA), which was the Army's signal intelligence branch at that time. Myers reportedly worked for the ASA as a linguist who was assigned to work translating intercepted messages from Eastern Bloc countries in Europe.

In 1972, Myers earned a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), in Washington, D.C. Myers then worked as an assistant professor of European Studies at SAIS and became a part-time contract instructor in August 1977 at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) teaching European studies.

While employed as a contractor at the FSI, Myers attended a lecture at the FSI on Cuba that was presented by a Cuban intelligence officer assigned to the Cuban permanent mission to the United Nations. The intelligence officer (identified in the complaint only as co-conspirator "A") then reportedly invited Myers and two of his colleagues to travel to Cuba on an academic visit. According to the FBI, Myers traveled to Cuba for a two-week trip in December 1978. The complaint contained several entries from a journal that Myers allegedly kept during the trip, and was obtained during a search of Myers' residence. In the journal entries, Myers fawned over the Cuban revolution and Cuban leader Fidel Castro, whom Myers said was "certainly one of the great political leaders of our time."

According the complaint, approximately six months after Myers returned from his trip to Cuba, he and Gwendolyn were visited at their home in South Dakota by "A" who, according to the FBI, pitched and recruited the Myers to work for the Cuban intelligence service. While they were recruited in 1979, the couple stated that they did not begin actively working for the Cuban

intelligence service until 1981. This timeline seems to match Myers' job search efforts.

After being recruited, Kendall Myers was allegedly instructed by his handler to move back to Washington and seek government employment in order to gain access to information deemed valuable to the Cubans. In 1981, he applied for a job at the Central Intelligence Agency and in 1982, he returned to working as a part-time contract instructor at the FSI, and became the chairman for Western European studies. In 1985, he applied for a full-time job at the FSI teaching Western European studies, and in 1999, Myers took a position at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), as the senior European analyst. Myers stayed in that position until his retirement in 2007. After his retirement from the State Department in 2007, Myers returned to SAIS and worked there until his arrest.

On the afternoon of April 15, 2009, Myers was approached by an FBI undercover source while leaving SAIS. The undercover source told Myers that he had been sent to contact Myers by a Cuban intelligence officer (identified in the complaint as co-conspirator "D"). The undercover source told Myers that the reason for the contact was because of the changes taking place in Cuba and the new U.S. administration. The source also wished Myers a happy birthday and gave him a Cuban cigar. Myers, convinced the undercover source was authentic, agreed to bring his wife to a meeting with the source at a Washington hotel later that evening.

Spilling the Beans

According to the complaint, the FBI undercover source met with the Myers on three occasions, April 15, April 16 and April 30, at different Washington-area hotels. During these meetings, they divulged a great deal of information pertaining to their work as Cuban agents. They provided information regarding what they passed to the Cuban government, how Kendall obtained the information and how they passed the information to their handlers. They also detailed their meetings with handlers and the methods they used to communicate with them.

According to the complaint, Kendall Myers proudly told the source that he provided information at the Secret and Top Secret levels to the Cubans. When asked by the source if he had furnished information from the CIA, Kendall Myers responded "all the time." He said that he preferred to take notes on classified documents rather than smuggle them out directly, but at times, he smuggled classified material out of the State Department in his briefcase, only to return the documents the next day after he had duplicated them. This information was then passed to handlers during meetings or by brush passes. Many of the meetings took place in New York, and the Myers felt those meetings were very dangerous. Gwendolyn admitted to having passed documents by exchanging shopping carts in a grocery store. The Myers also told the source about a shortwave radio set that they used to receive coded messages from their handler.

After the September 2001 arrest of Ana Montes, the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) senior Cuba analyst (who admitted to spying for Cuba for ideological motives), the Myers became much more careful about contacts with their handler, and most face-to-face contact after that time was accomplished outside of the United States. They told the source that between January 2002 and December 2005, they traveled to Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Ecuador, Brazil,

Argentina and Mexico in order to meet with Cuban handlers. The FBI was able to verify all these trips through official records.

After a confrontation with a supervisor at INR after returning from a 2006 trip to China, the Myers became very concerned that they had been identified and placed on a watch list by the INR supervisor. At that time, they told the source, they destroyed all their clandestine communications equipment, except for their shortwave radio and their false travel documents. They refused to travel to Mexico after this point because they believed it was too dangerous.

The Myers continued to receive periodic messages from their handler, who had begun to communicate via e-mail, following the Montes case. They also passed encrypted messages to their handler via e-mail. Gwendolyn noted that they would never use their own computer for such communication but used computers at Internet cafes instead.

The complaint provided the details of two e-mail messages the Myers received in December 2008 and March 2009 from a Cuban intelligence officer in Mexico, who asked for a meeting with them in Mexico. The intelligence officer was operating under the guise of an art dealer named Peter Herrera. The e-mails asked the Myers to come and see what he had for them. They responded to the e-mails saying they were delighted to hear from Peter and to learn that his art gallery was still open to them, but that they had not yet made travel plans for the coming year. The Myers told the source that they thought traveling to Mexico for a meeting with Peter was too risky. They also confirmed that Peter was a pseudonym used by a Cuban intelligence officer.

When the source asked the Myers during the third meeting if their trip to Mexico in 2005 had been "the end" (meaning the end of their work for the Cuban intelligence service), Kendall Myers replied that their work would continue, but that he wanted to work in more of a reserve status, where he would talk to contacts, rather than resume work as a full-time U.S. government employee. When the source told the Myers he was going to send a report to Cuba with information pertaining to them, Gwendolyn reportedly said, "be sure and tell them we love them."

They arranged to meet with the source on June 4, at yet another Washington-area hotel, and were arrested by the FBI when they appeared for that meeting. If the recordings of the three meetings have been accurately represented in the complaint, they are going to be very damaging to the Myers. Additionally, several of the physical items recovered during a search conducted on the Myers residence will also be strong evidence, such as the shortwave radio set and a travel guide printed in Cuba in the mid- to late-1990s, which would seem to substantiate their illicit 1995 visit.

'I' — The Cuban Staple

When discussing espionage cases, we often refer to an old Cold War acronym — MICE — to explain the motivations of spies. MICE stands for money, ideology, compromise and ego. Traditionally, money has proved to be the No. 1 motivation, but as seen in Kendall Myers' journal entries and in the meetings with the source, the Myers were motivated solely by ideology and not by money. In fact, the complaint provides no indication that the Myers had ever sought

or accepted money from the Cuban intelligence service for their espionage activities.

According to the complaint, the Myers were scathing in their criticism of the United States during their meetings with the source. In addition to their criticism of U.S. government policy, they were also very critical of American people, whom they referred to as "North Americans." Myers said the problem with the United States is that it is full of too many North Americans.

The Myers also expressed their love for Cuba and for the ideals of the Cuban revolution. In the first meeting with the source, Kendall asked the source, "How is everybody at home?" referring to Cuba. Gwendolyn expressed her desire to use the couple's boat to "sail home," meaning travel to Cuba.

The couple also provided the source with details of a January 1995 trip they took to Cuba. According to the Myers, in addition to receiving "lots of medals" from the Cuban government (something commonly awarded to ideological spies by the Soviet KGB), the best thing they received was the opportunity to meet Fidel Castro. The couple stated they had the opportunity to spend about four hours one evening with the Cuban leader. According to the FBI complaint, Kendall told the source that Castro was "wonderful, just wonderful" and Gwendolyn added, "He's the most incredible statesman for a hundred years for goodness sake."

During the third meeting, the couple also allegedly talked to the source about Ana Montes. Kendall told the source that Montes is a "hero ... but she took too many chances ... in my opinion ... she wasn't paranoid enough." Gwendolyn added "but she loved it, she did what she loved to do." Kendall added, "We have a great admiration for Ana Montes." Gwendolyn also noted that, "I envy her being able to love what she was doing and say what she was doing and why she was doing it 'cause I can't do that." This is significant because during her trial, Montes was unrepentant and railed against the United States when she read a statement during her sentencing hearing. Gwendolyn appeared to be responding to Montes' public statement.

In view of the Myers' case, the Montes case and other cases, like that involving Carlos and Elsa Alvarez, the Cubans clearly prefer to use agents who are ideologically motivated.

Lessons

In addition to the Cuban preference for ideologically motivated agents, perhaps one of the greatest lessons that can be taken from the Myers' case is simply a reminder that espionage did not end with the conclusion of the Cold War. According to the FBI complaint, a Cuban intelligence officer attempted to contact the Myers as recently as March 2009.

This case also shows that the Cuban intelligence service is very patient and is willing to wait for the agents it recruits to move into sensitive positions within the U.S. government. It took several years for Myers to get situated in a job with access to highly classified information. The Myers investigation also shows that the Cuban agents are not always obviously people working on Cuban issues — Myers was a European affairs specialist. There is also a possibility that the Cubans sold or traded intelligence they gained from Myers pertaining to Europe to their Soviet (and later Russian) friends.

While at INR, it is significant that Myers not only had access to information collected by State Department employees in the field, but also was privy to all-source intelligence reporting from the rest of the intelligence community (CIA, FBI, NSA, DIA, etc.) According to the complaint, an analysis of Myers' work computer revealed that from August 2006 to October 2007, Myers looked at more than 200 intelligence reports pertaining to Cuba; 75 of those reports made no mention of countries within Myers' area of interest (Europe), and most of the documents were classified either Secret or Top Secret.

The government will have to conduct a damage assessment that will attempt to trace everything Myers had access to during his entire career, which will no doubt encompass thousands of documents. As the State Department's representative to the intelligence community, INR is also involved in crafting policy papers and national intelligence estimates. Myers began working at the State Department before there was electronic access to records, so it will be very difficult to identify every document he had access to. But in addition to the actual documents he viewed, Myers also had the opportunity to chat with many colleagues about what they were working on and to ask their opinions of policies and events, so the damage goes much further than just documents, which complicates the damage assessment. He was also in charge of training new INR analysts, which could have allowed him an opportunity to assess which analysts were the best possible targets for Cuban recruitment efforts.

The information Myers could have provided while at the FSI is more subtle, but no less valuable from an intelligence operational perspective. Myers could have acted as a spotter, letting his handlers know which officers were moving through the institute, where they were going to be assigned, and perhaps even indicating which ones he thought were the best candidates for recruitment based on observed vulnerabilities. He could have served a similar function while at SAIS, pointing out promising students for the Cubans to focus on — especially students who agreed with his view of American policy, and who might be targeted for recruitment using an ideological approach. While Montes did graduate with a master's degree from SAIS in 1988, she was already working at the DIA (and for the Cubans) by the time she began her graduate work there, so it is unlikely that Myers was involved in her recruitment. In the end, it will likely take months, if not years, for the government to do a full damage assessment on this case.

One of the other interesting factors regarding this case is that in spite of Myers' strong anti-American political beliefs — which were reportedly expressed in his classes — none of the background investigations conducted on him by the State Department provided any indication of concern. Furthermore, he was cleared for access to Top Secret material in 1985 and Sensitive Compartmentalized Information (SCI) in 1999 — 20 years after he was recruited by the Cubans. Apparently the agents and investigators who conducted his background investigations did not dig deeply enough uncover the warning signs of his radical beliefs, or the people they interviewed knowingly withheld such information.

With Montes arrested at DIA, and now Myers from INR, it certainly makes one wonder where the next ideologically driven Cuban agent will be found inside the U.S. intelligence community.

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