

An exclusive interview with Venezuelan Investigative reporter Alicia Herrera

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A reprint of We planted the bomb, so what? with documents that disappeared during the trial against Posada Carriles and other terrorists.

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For more than 30 years a mysterious character provoked speculations and intensive research in order to put a face, a true name and an official post to the key man who gave information that finally led then President Richard Nixon to resign and abandon the White House in disgrace.

A couple of weeks ago, Deep Throat surfaced on TV and in the headlines of almost every newspaper in the world. Mark Felt, 90, former FBI Assistant Director was the man that supplied secret information to Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, The Washington Post journalists who investigated the case known as the Watergate scandal.

Now in Venezuela, from the shadows, another Deep Throat leaks important secret documents linked to the legal process against Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch, Freddy Lugo and Hernán Ricardo for the bombing of the Cuban airliner that cost the lives of 73 people.

“These are the papers”, says Alicia Herrera, the Venezuelan journalist who in 1979 wrote the book We planted the bomb, so what?, the title being an expression shouted at the prison yard of the San Carlos Barracks, in Caracas, by Hernán Ricardo, one of the two sentenced to

prison for the most barbaric and dramatic terrorist act in the Western Hemisphere, before 9/11.

While I looked at the documents I asked her how she got them. And Ms. Herrera looks at me through her clear and slight glasses, incapable of hiding the loquacity of her intelligent eyes. She is a woman that combines talent and imagination in search of truth behind her investigative reporting. She has already proved it with her book, which I have in my hands, now reprinted with the addition of the documents supplied by the Venezuelan Deep Throat. Great material, particularly for confirming sources and discarding others, until Deep Throat comes back. That's what I think while I begin the formal interview with the question about how the documents reached her hands.

Alicia Herrera (AH): Ernesto Villegas, who anchors "In Confidence" a Venezuelan Channel 8 program, invited me again in late April to be on his show. To my surprise, I saw that he was presenting some documents that were sent to him anonymously, with evidence of the guilt of the Barbados terrorists. They are documents that were hidden by the accomplices of the case and the terrorists at the DISIP (Venezuelan political police) at the time of the trial. Probably, all these years they were waiting for the right moment.

MAR: Which of the documents do you think is most important?

AH: All of them. But there is a transcript of an interrogation, about 22 pages, of Hernando Ricardo by Superintendent Francisco...

MAR: Who is Superintendent Francisco?

AH: He is from DISIP, and is constantly wanting Ricardo to tell him where the explosives and other weapons are hidden, which the terrorists had scattered in great quantity all over Caracas – for the Cuban plane and for the other crimes they had planned for all the Caribbean region. At that interrogation, the superintendent asks Hernán Ricardo: “Who planted the bomb in the plane?” And he answers very clearly: “Freddy Lugo and I”. And afterwards, Ricardo confesses to another series of bombings, including one in Barbados some months before, in July, which could be confusing. But no, the document specifies the date. “And who planted the bomb in Barbados?” and in parenthesis the date, October 6, 1976, and he answers, “Freddy Lugo and I”. This is one of the documents that also show the involvement of the people who financed those terrorists in Venezuela. In a big fund raising dinner it was said: “We need \$100,000,” and the money was raised right there.

MAR: From what you say it seems that these documents coincide with others recently declassified and published by the University of George Washington’s National Security Archive.

AH: The declassified documents by the FBI and the CIA prove that those people participated in the bombing of the Cuban plane. They knew it before the actual bombing happened. You can see it in the declassified documents. They even said it out loud at a fund raiser in which Posada Carriles says that he is going to blow up a Cuban plane and that Orlando Bosch has all the details. And Bosch boasts of the success of the Letelier operation and the preparation of bigger things to come. The CIA knew what these people were doing, because Posada Carriles was always a CIA man and that’s no secret. Everybody knows it.

MAR: Speaking of Posada Carriles, Is he mentioned in those documents?

AH: Of course. Luis this, Luis that, that's the name that is all over this document. "Luis knew it all." "What did Luis tell you?" There are many details in relation to Posada Carriles that incriminate him directly to the crime. From top to bottom Posada Carriles is mentioned.

MAR: Carlos Andrés Pérez was president at the time. Are people from his administration involved? Was Superintendent Francisco's mission to exonerate not only the two Cubans involved (Posada and Bosch), but also DISIP in the case of the bombing of the Cuban plane?

AH: During the questioning Hernán Ricardo says: "Don't keep bringing up names, because we are going to reach the top". That means there was a real involvement. But in the documents there is also a pact that I did not know of, which entails plans which Bosch could undertake and what he couldn't do in exchange for DISIP protection, of government protection. The document said that Bosch was guaranteed his stay in Venezuela, he would get adequate protection, weapons for his protection, a DISIP badge so nobody would bother him, the right to visit, organize and raise funds from the Cuban community for his struggle against Castro, and the promise of a meeting with President Pérez on October 10, that is, a few days after the bombing of the Cuban plane.

MAR: And Bosch's commitment?

AH: On the part of Bosch, the conditions of the agreement were not to undertake any action of war in Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia. Panama was rejected at the beginning and later accepted; also that the struggle against Castro-Communism would not stop at the rest of the continent, and particularly the Caribbean, which explains quite well the bombing of the Cuban plane. In short, a pact that gave the terrorists mobility, and all kinds of favorable conditions.

MAR: These documents are potentially explosive. What are you going to do with them?

AH: At present they are in the hands of Venezuela's Attorney General, so that they can be used as evidence demonstrating that those terrorists were really involved, not only in the preparation of the bombing, but also in the bombing itself.

MAR: The new edition of your book with the Deep Throat addendum has been launched in Cuba. When will it be presented in Venezuela?

AH: We are going to now launch the new edition of the book in Venezuela. Yes, in the near future it will be presented in Caracas.

MAR: Will the book be published in the United States?

AH: Yes, shortly it will be translated and distributed in the U.S. I can't promise an exact date, because I still have a lot of work to do, but of course, it will be published

MAR: Will Alicia Herrera continue investigating and writing?

AH: Of course. It's my commitment.

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