



## Ana Belen Montes

- 45 years old at time of sentencing.
- Senior DIA analyst for Cuban matters
- Born on U.S. military installation in Nurnberg, Germany
- Graduated at University of Virginia in 1979
- Master's Degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in 1988



# CDSE

Center for Development  
of Security Excellence

# CASE STUDY

## Conspiracy to Commit Espionage

### WHAT HAPPENED

In 1984, Montes held a clerical job at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. She often spoke openly against the U.S. Government's policies towards Central America. Soon, her opinions caught the attention of Cuban "officials" who thought she would be sympathetic to their cause. She met with them, and soon after, she agreed to spy for Cuba.

She applied at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), a key producer of intelligence for the Pentagon. By the time she started work there in 1985, she was a fully recruited spy. Ana Montes rose through the ranks at DIA, eventually becoming the senior analyst for matters relating to Cuba. For over 17 years, Montes was a highly regarded DIA analyst by day and Cuban spy by night. Motivated solely by ideology, Montes did not accept any payment for passing classified information, except for reimbursements for some expenses.

To escape detection, Montes never removed any documents from work, electronically or in hard copy. Instead, she memorized the details, went home, and typed them up on her laptop. Then, she transferred the information onto encrypted disks. After receiving instructions from the Cubans in code via short-wave radio, she would meet with her handler over lunch at a local restaurant where she delivered the encrypted disks.

During her years at DIA, security officials learned about her foreign policy views and were concerned about her access to sensitive information, but they had no reason to believe she was sharing secrets. She even passed a routine polygraph examination with "no deception indicated" (NDI).

In 1996, an astute DIA colleague—acting on a gut feeling—reported to a security official that he felt Montes might be under the influence of Cuban intelligence. The official interviewed her, but she admitted nothing. Four years later, when he learned that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was working to uncover an unidentified Cuban agent operating in Washington, he contacted the FBI with his suspicions. After a careful review of the facts, the FBI opened an investigation and began building a case against Montes. Agents did not arrest Montes right away in the hopes of identifying her Cuban handler. However, when the 9/11 attacks occurred, Montes was to be re-assigned to work related to U.S. war plans. The FBI and DIA arrested her immediately.

Montes acknowledged that she revealed the identities of four American undercover intelligence officers working in Cuba. She pled guilty in 2002 and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

### INDICATORS

**Access Attributes** - Montes held a Top Secret/Secure Compartmented Information (TS/SCI) clearance, and her role as a DIA Analyst gave her authorized access to some of our Nation's most closely guarded counterintelligence secrets.

**Foreign Influence and Preference** - Montes was very outspoken about her opposition to U.S. foreign policy, particularly regarding Nicaragua. While studying at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C, Montes befriended a woman named Marta Rita Velazquez. Velazquez is currently under indictment and living outside the U.S. Velazquez's indictment charges stem from her recruitment of Montes to spy for Cuba.

## IMPACT

- Speaking in Congress in 2012, Michelle Van Cleave, the head of US Counterintelligence under the Bush administration, described Montes as "one of the most damaging spies the United States has ever found." "She compromised everything — virtually everything — that we knew about Cuba and how we operated in Cuba and against Cuba," Van Cleave said.
- Chris Simmons, a former investigator with the DIA, described Montes as "a very deadly woman, a very dangerous woman," NBC reported. "A lot of spies historically have given up information, but she repeatedly tried to get Americans killed in combat."

## ADDITIONAL INFO

- To escape detection, Montes never removed any documents from work, electronically or in hard copy. Instead, she kept the details in her head, went home, and typed them up on her laptop. Then, she transferred the information onto encrypted disks. After receiving instructions from the Cubans in code via short-wave radio, she would meet with her handler and turn over the disks.
- The FBI built a case against Montes through physical and electronic surveillance and covert searches. The agents also wanted to identify her Cuban handler, so they waited for a face-to-face meeting between the two before making an arrest of Montes. However, outside events overtook the investigation. Due to the 9/11 attacks, Montes was about to be assigned work related to U.S. war plans. The FBI and DIA did not want that to happen, so they moved quickly to arrest her.
- In Havana, agents with the Cuban intelligence service taught Montes how to slip packages to agents innocuously, how to communicate safely in code, and how to disappear if needed. They even taught Montes how to fake her way through a polygraph test. She later told investigators it involves the strategic tensing of the sphincter muscles. It is unknown if the ploy worked, but Montes did pass a DIA-administered polygraph in 1994, after a decade of spying.

### Questions to consider:

- What factors may have contributed to Ana Montes being able to spy for Cuba for so long?
- How did interagency cooperation, or the lack thereof, affect the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of Ana Montes?

### Resources for further exploration:

- [The Psychology of Spies Webinar](#)  
([The Psychology of Spies \(cdse.edu\)](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf))  
  
Understanding Espionage and National Security Crimes  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/ci/ci-jobaidseries-understandingespionage.pdf>)
- [Foreign Intelligence Entity \(FIE\) Targeting and Recruitment](#)  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaids/foreign-intelligence-entity-targeting-recruitment-methodology.pdf>)

## Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP Senior Official/ITP Manager