



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on December 5, 2023

## Feds: Colombian Immigrant Who Became U.S. Ambassador Spied for Cuba for Four Decades

A Castro-loving Colombian immigrant who served as the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia [was arrested](#) last week and charged with spying for Cuba.

Manuel Rocha, a naturalized citizen, spied for the communist regime for some 40 years, the federal criminal complaint against him says, and was finally unmasked only last year when the FBI used an undercover agent to catch him.

Frighteningly, Rocha began spying for the Cubans as soon as the State Department hired him. He kept up the treason as he rose through the ranks at the height of the Cold War during the Reagan administration.



Juan Pinzon/iStock/Getty Images Plus  
Havana, Cuba

### Spy Career

“By his own admission, beginning no later than approximately 1981, and continuing to the present, ROCHA secretly supported the Republic of Cuba and its clandestine intelligence-gathering mission against the United States by serving as a covert agent of Cuba’s intelligence services,” the [criminal complaint says](#).

Rocha rose steadily through the ranks and eventually became an advisor to the military’s [U.S. Southern Command](#). [Cuba is](#) in the command’s area of responsibility. His resumé:

- 1981: Joined State Department
- February 1989-November 1991: first secretary, U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Mexico;
- November 1991-July 1994: deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic;
- July 1994 through July 1995: director of Inter-American Affairs, U.S. National Security Council, with special responsibility for Cuba;
- July 1995-July 1997: deputy principal officer at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, Cuba;
- July 1997-November 1999: deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- November 1999-August 2002: ambassador to Bolivia.

But Rocha’s career as a traitor ended in November last year, when the FBI learned he was a covert agent for Cuban intelligence.

On November 15, 2022, in Miami, he answered a WhatsApp message from an undercover FBI agent who pretended to be a Cuban spy.

“Good Afternoon ambassador, my name is Miguel and I have a message for you from your friends in Havana,” the message said. “It is in regards to a sensitive matter. Are you available for a telephone



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call?”

Rocha swallowed the bait, and later that day, the two spoke on the phone.

Rocha told the agent that his Cuban masters told him to live a normal life, and that he “created the legend of a right-wing person,” meaning an anti-communist.

Rocha told the agent that “my number one concern; my number one priority was ... any action on the part of Washington that would ... endanger the life of ... of the leadership, or the ... or the revolution itself.” Rocha told the agent to send the Cubans his “warmest regards.”

Rocha told the agent he had spied for Cuba for “decades,” the [complaint alleges](#).

“How many years?” the agent asked.

“Almost 40,” Rocha replied.

Rocha met the agent three times. He made clear that he was loyal not to the country that imprudently made him a citizen, but to Fidel Castro, the mass-murdering communist tyrant who ran Cuba:

Rocha consistently referred to the United States as “the enemy,” and used the term “we” to describe himself and Cuba. Rocha additionally praised Fidel Castro as the “Commandante” and referred to his contacts in Cuban intelligence as his “Compañeros” (comrades) and to the Cuban intelligence services as the “Dirección tell-tale terms used by Cuban operatives.

## **The Arrest**

After three meetings with the agent, the State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service lowered the boom.

During a voluntary interview, Rocha denied everything except the first meeting with the agent.

He “lied repeatedly,” the [complaint alleges](#), even “denied ever having met someone with the [agent’s] description, even after being shown a picture of the [agent]”:

When Rocha was shown a picture of him sitting across from the [agent] during one of their meetings, Rocha said the [agent] approached him, but one time only. When told the interviewers possessed information that he met with the [agent] on more than one occasion, Rocha stated he did not want to comment.

Rocha repeatedly lied on security and classified information nondisclosure agreements not to disclose nonpublic information, the [complaint alleges](#). He also repeatedly lied in affirming his loyalty to the United States.

In the early years of Rocha’s employ at the State Department, the United States was struggling to thwart communist movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador that were [aided and funded by Cuba](#).



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