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Victor Manuel Rocha, 73, Former U.S. Ambassador and National Security Council Official Charged with Secretly Acting as an Agent of the Cuban Government

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Federal prosecutors have charged Victor Manuel Rocha, 73, of Miami, Florida, a former U.S. Department of State employee who served on the National Security Council from 1994 to 1995 and ultimately as U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia from 2000 to 2002, with committing multiple federal crimes by secretly acting for decades as an agent of the government of the Republic of Cuba.

"This action exposes one of the highest-reaching and longest-lasting infiltrations of the United States government by a foreign agent," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "We allege that for over 40 years, Victor Manuel Rocha served as an agent of the Cuban government and sought out and obtained positions within the United States government that would provide him with access to non-public information and the ability to affect U.S. foreign policy. Those who have the privilege of serving in the government of the United States are given an enormous amount of trust by the public we serve. To betray that trust by falsely pledging loyalty to the United States while serving a foreign power is a crime that will be met with the full force of the Justice Department."

“Like all federal officials, U.S. diplomats swear an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Acting as an agent for Cuba – a hostile foreign power – is a blatant violation of that oath and betrays the trust of the American people,” said FBI Director Christopher Wray. “The FBI will continue to rigorously defend against foreign governments targeting America, and we will find and hold accountable anyone who violates their oath to the United States, no matter how long it takes.”

“For decades, Rocha allegedly worked as a covert agent for Cuba and abused his position of trust in the U.S. government to advance the interests of a foreign power,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “However long it might take, we will deliver justice to those who betray their solemn oaths to the American people.”

“The Southern District and our law enforcement partners stand ready to protect the United States from individuals who act unlawfully as agents of foreign governments,” said U.S. Attorney Markenzy Lapointe for the Southern District of Florida. “Individuals who violate federal law by engaging in clandestine activity for hostile foreign states, and by providing false information about those activities to the U.S. government, endanger American democracy. That is especially so for past or present employees of the United States who took an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, and for U.S. citizens who benefit from the freedoms and opportunities of this country. The U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners in South Florida, and elsewhere, will continue to vigorously enforce all federal laws.”

According to the complaint, beginning no later than approximately 1981, and continuing to the present, Rocha, a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Colombia, 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 General Directorate of Intelligence.

To further that role, according to the complaint, Rocha obtained employment in the U.S. Department of State between 1981 and 2002, in positions that provided him access to nonpublic information, including classified information, and the ability to affect U.S. foreign policy. After his State Department employment ended, Rocha engaged in other acts intended to support Cuba's intelligence services. From in or around 2006 until in or around 2012, Rocha was an advisor to the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, a joint command of the United States military whose area of responsibility includes Cuba.

The complaint alleges that Rocha kept his status as a Cuban agent secret in order to protect himself and others and to allow himself the opportunity to engage in additional clandestine activity. Rocha provided false and misleading information to the United States to maintain his secret mission; traveled outside the United States to meet with Cuban intelligence operatives; and made false and misleading statements to obtain travel documents.

According to the complaint, Rocha began his State Department career in 1981, rising through the ranks to serve in a variety of roles, including (1) from in or around February 1989 until in or around November 1991, as the First Secretary at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Mexico; (2) from in or around November 1991 until in or around July 1994, as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; (3) from in or around July 1994 until in or around July 1995, as a Department of State employee, as the Director of Inter-American Affairs on the U.S. National Security Council, with special responsibility for, among other things, Cuba; (4) from in or around July 1995 until in or around July 1997, as Deputy Principal Officer at the U.S. Interests

Section in Havana, Cuba; (5) from in or around July 1997 until in or around November 1999, as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina; and (6) from in or around November 1999 until in or around August 2002, as Ambassador to Bolivia at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia.

The complaint alleges that, in a series of meetings during 2022 and 2023, with an undercover agent from the FBI posing as a covert Cuban General Directorate of Intelligence representative, Rocha made repeated statements admitting his "decades" of work for Cuba, spanning "40 years." When the undercover told Rocha he was "a covert representative here in Miami" whose mission was "to contact you, introduce myself as your new contact, and establish a new communication plan," Rocha answered "Yes," and proceeded to engage in a lengthy conversation during which he described and celebrated his activity as a Cuban intelligence agent. Throughout the meetings, Rocha behaved as a Cuban agent, consistently referring to the United States as "the enemy," and using the term "we" to describe himself and Cuba. Rocha additionally praised Fidel Castro as the "Comandante," and referred to his contacts in Cuban intelligence as his "Compañeros" (comrades) and to the Cuban intelligence services as the "Dirección." Rocha described his work as a Cuban agent as "a grand slam."

Rocha is charged with conspiring to act as an agent of a foreign government without prior notification to the Attorney General; acting as an agent of a foreign government without prior notification to the Attorney General; and with using a passport obtained by false statement. He is expected to make an initial appearance before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Miami today, Dec. 4.

The FBI Miami Field Office is investigating the case, with valuable contributions by the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service and the FBI's Washington Field Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jonathan D. Stratton and John C. Shipley of the Southern District of Florida, along with Trial Attorneys Heather M. Schmidt and Christine A. Bonomo of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section are prosecuting the case.

Anyone with tips can call 1-800-CALL-FBI (800-225-5324) or visit tips.fbi.gov.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

[Rocha complaint](#)

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