

RB-213

1987

this is lionel martin in havana...A Cuban air force brigadier general defected to the United States thursday with his family in a small plane. Here is the story -

General Rafael del Pino never made the highest policy making ranks of the Cuban armed forces - but he was a national hero known to millions of Cubans. His claim to fame was as a pilot in the Cuban revolution's tiny and outmoded air force during the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion back in April 1961. With only one hundred hours of air time under his belt, del Pino took up an old T-33 combat trainer and shot down one of the invaders B-26 bombers.

Hundreds of thousand of Cubans read del Pino's own account of his exploits at the Bay of Pigs in his prize winning book - and one can speculate that since he is already an author, he might very well write a book about why he left Cuba so suddenly with his family.

Rafael del Pino knows the United States - as a young man he studied at a Baptist Academy near Knoxville, Tennessee/

While General del Pino was not one of the big fish of the Cuban military establishment, there is little doubt that as an air force general and a national hero, he had access to many secrets.

For CBC News, this is lionel martin in havana

*Cuban Air Force Brigadier and Bay of Pigs
Hero, Defects with his family
Rafael del Pino*

*CBC
May 28, 1987*