

The 1976 Barbados terrorist bomb attack: The pain is still intact for Cubans

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Families of the Victims of Barbados.

Photo: Bill Hackwell

Today October 6, on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the Barbados Crime, Resumen Latinoamericano shares an interview with the daughter of the Cubana de Aviación Flight 455 co-pilot, Miguel Espinosa, one of the 73 innocent people, many of whom were children, killed in that terrorist attack that the Cuban people will never forget. Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, the CIA operatives who

planned the bombing and many others, never were held accountable, in fact, they bragged about it.

Miguel Espinosa was afraid. "I feel I don't have long to live," he told his family days before the crime in Barbados.

On two occasions in 1976, Espinosa co-piloted a plane in danger of exploding. The first time was when he was transporting Hortensia Bussi, the widow of Chilean President Salvador Allende, from Mexico to Havana shortly after the coup in Santiago de Chile. One of the aircraft's luggage contained a bomb that failed to detonate.

A few months later, the Cubana de Aviacion airplane he would command on his way back to the island was waiting for his departure from the Kingston airport in Jamaica when a technical delay prevented the death of Espinosa and the rest of the passengers. One bomb exploded in the carriage that transported the luggage to the aircraft just minutes before the estimated time of departure.



Miguel Espinosa

On the third occasion, Espinosa didn't have the same luck. He was not on the

CU-455 flight list from Barbados to Havana on October 6, but at the last minute, he had to fill in for a crew member. The aircraft left on time with two active bombs that exploded within minutes of takeoff, just 600 meters off the coast of Bridgetown. Miguel Espinosa died at the age of 47, along with the rest of the crew and passengers: 73, including 57 Cubans. He is one of the 3,478 victims of the terrorism that has plagued Cuba with the complicity of successive U.S. administrations from 1959 to the present.

"I was ten years old," Haymel Espinosa Gómez said as she leafs through a thick book of photos and newspaper clippings assembled by her over the past 40 years. Each headline relates to the crime in which her father, Miguel Espinosa, lost his life.

"On October 6, we had arranged for Dad to pick up my mom and me at the school exit. We were there together because we had to fix and paint the classroom with other mothers and classmates. When we hadn't heard from him by four in the afternoon, we felt something had happened," she remarked.

Around five o'clock, a small bus parked right in front of her elementary school, and men and women dressed in Cubana de Aviación uniforms began to get out of the vehicle. "We deduced that the worst had happened". The news of the terrorist bomb attack spread like wildfire and the Espinosa-Gomez family's house began to quickly fill up with neighbors, friends, and relatives.

"Everyone came to support us. Our pain multiplied. Days later, I heard the recording recovered from the plane's black box," she recalled as her eyes misted with tears. "Although I was a very young girl, I have never been able to forget the desperation in that beloved voice."

Today, after so many years, the pain in Haymel Espinosa remains intact. " Whenever I hear the recording, I change the channel or move away from the TV."

In 2006, relatives of the victims of this horrific attack visited the monument erected in Barbados in honor of the 73 passengers aboard the CU-455.

“It’s very close to shore -Haymel recalled-. I remember we sat in silence as close to the sea as possible. We spent a long time looking at the horizon, and we cried. We longed for a place in Cuba to place flowers for them.”

If he hadn’t praised the red dress of a doctor on the block -which was actually green- we would still think he didn’t know the colors. She, astonished due to that mistake, did all the necessary tests, and the results were positive for color blindness. He wasn’t released from Cubana de Aviación because of country’s lack of pilots and his prestige and experience in the airline”.

Haymel Espinosa became a doctor not only because of her vocation but also because her father would have wanted her to. She joined the Revolutionary Armed Forces, just like he did. “And I even tried to become a pilot, but I couldn’t,” she said and smiled.

“The tragedy changed my life. Shortly before the bombing in Barbados, I was learning to play the guitar. My dad had put one together for me from parts of older ones. The day before he left, he swore to bring me a new one when he got home that October 6; he had already raised the money. That day, he would have picked me up from school with it in his hands. That’s how I imagined it. The guitar never arrived, neither did he, and I never wanted to play again.”

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - US](#)

