

March 2010

NomineeAlert

Aponte's Background

English Teacher

Associate Counsel, Blue Cross of Greater Philadelphia

White House Fellow—Special Assistant to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Associate, Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy

Partner, Pena, Aponte & Ortiz-Dalio

Special Assistant, White House Office of Presidential Personnel

Member of the Cabinet of Puerto Rico

Partner, Alexander, Aponte & Marks

Consultant, Aponte Consulting

EDUCATION

B.A., Rosemont College

M.A., Villanova University

J.D., Temple University School of Law

Law



this issue:

Mari Del Carmen Aponte,
Nominee for Ambassador to El Salvador

Who is Aponte?

On December 9, 2009 President Obama nominated Mari Del Carmen Aponte to be the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador.

withdrew.

There was talk at the time that she would

instead be appointed to another job which would also require Senate confirmation, but that never took place. Timothy W. Maier writing for Insight on the News reported at the time:

Mari Carmen Aponte, who served on the Clinton transition team and was nominated by the president to serve as U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic,

allegedly cohabited with a man whom U.S. counterintelligence considers a Cuban DGI agent, according to a confidential intelligence memo delivered to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms and obtained by Insight.

Disturbing Ties to Cuba

Aponte was previously nominated by President Clinton to be Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. It was discovered that she had had an eight-year relationship with a friend of Cuban intelligence. She also accepted a loan from this man, which she never repaid.

The loan was allegedly from DGI, the Cuban spy agency. She was questioned and gave somewhat inconsistent answers, and she refused to take a polygraph test. After Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Jesse Helms made it clear that she would face tough questions at her confirmation hearings, she

“Aponte has already been rejected for an Ambassadorship by the Senate due to her ties to a foreign spy. Her nomination should be immediately withdrawn. We can’t have Ambassadors who give aid to our enemies.”

-Bill Wilson, President Americans for Limited Government

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What you really need to know about Mari Del Carmen Aponte

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The man is not named in the memo.

The suspected Cuban agent allegedly introduced Aponte to Cuban DGI officers in Washington; she reportedly was recruited as a "DGI asset," according to the memo. "When the FBI questioned her about her involvement with Cuban intelligence, she reportedly refused to cooperate, saying that since she was not seeking a permanent White House position she was not subject to a background check," the memo states. Fn1.

In the vetting process for that nomination Aponte had significant difficulty in obtaining a security clearance.

One State Department official said Miss Aponte had trouble receiving a top-secret security clearance required for the diplomatic post because of questions about her reliability. But a department spokesman said she eventually received the clearance as part of the nomination screening process.

Miss Aponte has denied knowing about the recruitment effort. However, in April 1994 she refused FBI requests to take a polygraph test after some of her answers to the FBI's questions showed minor inconsistencies, the officials said.

The FBI questioning began a short time after a 1993 story in Miami's *Diario Las Americas* newspaper reported that a Cuban intelligence officer had defected and revealed how the DGI was planning to target Miss Aponte at the White House for recruitment. Fn.2.

Reverse Midas Touch

Everything Aponte touches seems to turn to lead. Aponte served as an advisor to the unpopular, one-term DC mayor, Sharon Pratt Kelly. Aponte served on the board of the troubled University of the District of Columbia. She also served on the lax United Way of America board of governors that allowed the organization's president to enrich himself, his family, and his cronies at the organization's expense. Fn.3. Her law firms were constantly changing name partners, and at least one of them collapsed.

In addition, the business license of Aponte & Tsaknis was revoked, and she was the registered agent for the firm. Furthermore, she was managing partner of KJN/DC, an advertising firm, whose business license was revoked. Now she consults and helps people interact with the government. Fn.3.

Sources for further reading:

Fn.1. Timothy W. Maier, *Do You Want to Know a Secret?*, INSIGHT ON THE NEWS, March 23, 1998.

Fn.2. Bill Gertz, *Nominee for enjoy job quietly bowed out; Report surfaced link to Cuba*, THE WASHINGTON TIMES, January 25, 1999, at A1.

Fn.3. Felicity Barringer, *United Way Finds Pattern of Abuse by Former Chief*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, April 4, 1992, at 1. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/04/us/united-way-finds-pattern-of-abuse-by-former-chief.html?pagewanted=all>. (Accessed March 5, 2010.)

United Way of America Company History, FundingUniverse.com. Available online at: <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/United-Way-of-America-Company-History.html>. (Accessed March 5, 2010.)

Karen W. Arenson, *Ex-United Way Leader Gets 7 Years for Embezzlement*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, June 23, 1995, at A1. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/23/us/ex-united-way-leader-gets-7-years-for-embezzlement.html?pagewanted=1>. (Accessed March 5, 2010.)

Fn.4. Source: Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia.

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