

# ***A Maimed Terrorist Flees Cell at Bellevue***

**By SELWYN RAAB**

William Morales, who lost most of both hands in an explosion and is suspected of being a member of F.A.L.N., the terrorist group seeking independence for Puerto Rico, escaped from a prison ward at Bellevue Hospital yesterday, apparently by using an elastic bandage as a makeshift rope to climb down from a 40-foot-high window.

Police and Correction Department officials said that he had slipped out of his maximum-security cell within a few yards of a busy East Side street with the help of confederates inside and outside of the hospital.

Mr. Morales, who is 31 years old, was sentenced last month to 29 to 89 years in prison for possession of explosives and other offenses. At his sentencing, he exclaimed in court: "They're not going to hold me forever."

The acrobatic escape is believed to have occurred shortly after 7 A.M. from a building on First Avenue at 27th Street in the midst of the huge Bellevue Hospital complex. The window is normally within

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sight of hundreds of hospital workers and passers-by.

A pair of 14-inch wire clippers smuggled into the hospital cell was used by Mr. Morales to cut open a metal window gate, officials said, and investigators found a pair of "deeply indented" shoe prints in a grassy patch beneath Mr. Morales's cell, suggesting that an accomplice had caught or otherwise aided him as he dropped from a window three stories up.

Mr. Morales is the only suspected member of F.A.L.N. — Armed Forces of National Liberation, a radical underground group advocating independence for Puerto Rico — to be arrested in the four years that the group has claimed responsibility for more than 100 bombings in the country.

Last July 12, Mr. Morales's face was injured and his hands were blown off, leaving him with only part of a thumb and a palm, in an explosion in what the police described as a Queens "bomb factory." He was in the hospital to be fitted for artificial hands before being transferred to a state prison.

Shortly after the escape, William J. Ciuros Jr., the city's Correction Commissioner, acknowledged that "there was sloppiness on our part" in permitting the escape of an inmate who had been considered a maximum-security risk. But he said there was no evidence that any officer had intentionally aided Mr. Morales.

## Correction Officer Suspended

Mr. Ciuros announced that Thomas Ryan, the correction officer responsible for Mr. Morales, had been suspended without pay for "negligence in permitting the escape." He indicated that other officers might be brought up on similar departmental charges.

The suspension of Officer Ryan, who has been a prison guard for 15 years, was denounced by the correction officers' union. A spokesman said that the officer was being made a "scapegoat" by the Commissioner, who had failed to assign sufficient guards to the prison ward.

The Commissioner said it was a "remote" possibility that Mr. Morales had fled in a way other than through the window in his cell. Correction and Police Department officials gave the following account of the escape:

Mr. Morales was housed alone in a third-floor cell. Inside, a 10-foot-high window was encased in a grated metal gate, one-quarter of an inch thick. The outside of the window was enclosed by a thin wire-mesh screen.

Officer Ryan escorted Mr. Morales to a lavatory at 2:30 A.M., but it was unclear if the officer observed the prisoner while he was using the toilet, where the clippers could have been hidden. Mr. Morales was then returned to his cell, where at 7 A.M. Officer Ryan said he observed "a form" in Mr. Morales's bed. But 30 minutes

later, when a new officer came on duty, the prisoner had vanished.

Inside the cell, officers found the wire cutters, which had been used to slice open a one-square-foot section of the metal gate. Investigators believe the slim, muscular prisoner squeezed through the opening, pulled down the window, and pried open the outside screen.

Then he is believed to have used the flesh-colored bandage to descend part of the wall of the redbrick building. The flimsy rope snapped, and Mr. Morales must have dropped to the ground.

A piece of the elastic bandage was found tied to the cell bed and segments of the bandage were found in the grassy patch on the ground. The bandage was 10 feet long and had been wetted to strengthen it, and possibly to make it easier to stretch, the police said.

## Glasses Found on Ground

On the ground the police also found Mr. Morales's unshattered tortoise-shell-framed glasses, his hospital slippers and four pens bound by two rubber bands.

Commissioner Ciuros said that the cutting of the metal gate "must have been time-consuming and noisy," implying that guards should have heard the clamor. Five other guards beside Mr. Ryan were on duty to observe 25 inmates and Mr. Morales.

Mr. Morales, who is 5 feet 8, "was dexterous and very possibly" could have managed to use the wire clippers, despite his injuries, Commissioner Ciuros said.

His cell was searched on Friday, the Commissioner said. That same day Mr. Morales was visited by his wife, Dykia, but she was not allowed a "contact" meeting and was separated from him by a glass partition.

Commissioner Ciuros said that Mr. Morales had his last "contact," or face-to-face meeting, Friday evening with his lawyer, Susan Tipograph. She could not be reached for comment last night.



Police photo of William Morales



# **Wife of Morales Sought by Police For Questioning**

## **F.B.I. Unable to Find Her Since Terrorist Escaped**

**By SELWYN RAAB**

The wife of William Morales, the Puerto Rican terrorist who escaped from a prison ward at Bellevue Hospital Monday, has apparently disappeared from her East Harlem home. She is being sought along with her husband, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said yesterday.

Quentin Ertel, an F.B.I. spokesman, said that Police Department detectives and Federal agents had been unable to find Dylcia Pagan Morales since her husband's escape. Despite the loss of his hands in an explosion, Mr. Morales is believed to have fled by climbing down 40 feet from his cell window.

"As far as we know there is no trace of her, Morales or their child," Mr. Ertel said.

Mr. Ertel said that Federal and city investigators had also been unable to locate for questioning one of Mr. Morales's lawyers, Susan Tipograph, the last visitor who met with him face to face in the prison ward. The lawyer and Mrs. Morales both saw the convicted prisoner last Saturday, but his wife spoke with him separated by a glass partition, according to the city's Correction Department, which was criticized by investigators and other officials yesterday.

### **Lawyer Denies Involvement**

Miss Tipograph, in response to a message left with her telephone answering service, called a New York Times reporter last night. "It's strange they can't find me," she said, adding, "I know nothing about the escape and have nothing else to say."

The F.B.I. described the 31-year-old Mr. Morales as "dangerous" and said he was the object of a major search in the United States and Puerto Rico. He was sentenced last month a term of 29 to 89 years on charges of possessing explosives and weapons, after being maimed in an explosion in what was described as a Queens "bomb factory" last July.

Mr. Morales is the only purported member of the F.A.L.N., an underground group demanding independence for Puerto Rico, to have been convicted of alleged terrorist activities — possession of explosives and weapons.

### **Accomplices in Escape**

Detectives believe Mr. Morales was aided in his escape by accomplices. Alone in his third-floor cell, he reportedly cut his way through a metal window gate with a smuggled pair of wire clippers. Then, with an elastic bandage tied to a bed and possibly looped around his waist, he dropped onto a patch of grass in an unguarded area near First Avenue and 27th Street. Accomplices may have been waiting for him on the ground and could have broken his fall.

The main criticisms leveled against the Department of Correction were:

¶ Investigators and the Correction Officers Benevolent Association complained that the department recently ended round-the-clock surveillance of Mr. Morales to save money because of rising overtime costs for guards. The end of the 24-hour watch may have contributed to the escape, investigators said.

¶ The officer who was mainly responsible for guarding Mr. Morales may have

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# Police Are Seeking Wife of Terrorist

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been asleep at the time of the early-morning escape, police and Correction Department investigators said. The report was denied by the officer, Thomas Ryan, who was suspended without pay shortly after the escape.

¶ District Attorney John J. Santucci of Queens, whose office successfully prosecuted Mr. Morales last March, said he had repeatedly warned Correction Department officials that Mr. Morales would try to escape from the prison ward.

Richard Basoa, the president of the correction officers' union, said the union also had protested to the department last month that Mr. Morales was "too dangerous" to be transferred to the prison ward and should have been housed at a more secure facility on Rikers Island. Mr. Morales was in the hospital to be fitted for artificial hands.

William J. Ciuross Jr., the Correction

Department Commissioner, said through a spokesman that the escape "was a question of human error as opposed to an error in the system."

At his trials in Federal and state courts, Mr. Morales characterized himself as a fighter for Puerto Rican independence, but he has never admitted belonging to the F.A.L.N., which translates from Spanish as the Armed Forces of National Liberation.

Little is known about Mr. Morales's background. His wife, Dylcia, is believed to be about 33 years old. According to her friends, she grew up in East Harlem and was graduated from Cathedral High School in Manhattan in 1964.

Her last known address was 250 East 105th Street. The custodian of the building said she and her infant son had left about a month ago, owing back rent.

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