

Suspect Agrees To Cooperate in Letelier Inquiry

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By Timothy S. Robinson
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A 35-year-old American expatriate charged in the bombing murder of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier has agreed to provide U.S. investigators with detailed information about alleged Chilean government involvement in Letelier's death, The Washington Post has learned.

Sources said the cooperation of Michael Vernon Townley, a Chilean secret police agent for the past several years, also should provide federal investigators with new information about the manner in which the bombing was allegedly carried out by anti-Castro Cuban exiles based in the U.S.

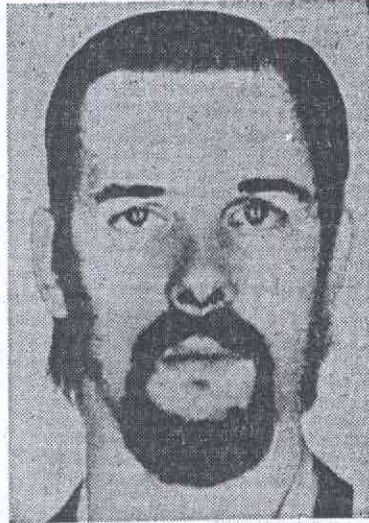
In addition, Townley has claimed to have information about international terrorism that will aid the FBI and police forces in other countries in their investigations of bombings, assassinations and other terrorist incidents, sources said.

In return, Townley reportedly has agreed to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to murder Letelier, which carries a possible maximum term of life imprisonment. Sources familiar with the plea-bargaining process said they felt that was a "realistic" agreement in return for the crucial testimony Townley can provide in the Letelier investigation.

Townley's agreement to cooperate was seen by investigators here as a clear indication that an indictment will ultimately be returned against "as many as 10" persons—probably including former Chilean government officials—in connection with the murder of Letelier.

Letelier, an outspoken critic of the Chilean military government headed by Gen. Augusto Pinochet, died almost instantly when a bomb exploded under his car Sept. 21, 1976. Also assassinated with him was Ronni Moffit, a coworker at the Institute for Policy Studies to which the two were driving when the explosion occurred on Sheridan Circle NW.

Townley's decision to cooperate fol-



MICHAEL V. TOWNLEY
... "as many as 10" face charges

towed his quick expulsion from Chile after U.S. officials sought him for questioning in connection with the Letelier bombing.

Sources said Townley apparently felt abandoned by his former Chilean superiors and also apparently realized the momentum of the probe was increasing and that the first person to cooperate with investigators might get a better deal than other persons ultimately convicted in connection with the murder.

The pressure on Townley was reportedly increased with the arrests recently in Miami of two other alleged suspects in the Letelier murder case, Guillermo Novo and Alvin Ross. The two men reportedly were caught with guns and a large amount of cocaine, and already face possibly lengthy prison terms in connection with those charges.

Townley's attorney, Seymour Glazer, has consistently refused to discuss his client's case with reporters. He refused to comment yesterday on the report that his client was cooperating with authorities.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugene M.

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Letelier Murder Suspect To Cooperate With Probe

LETELIER, From A1

Propper and FBI special agent L. Carter Cornick also refused to comment yesterday on any matters involving Townley or the Letelier investigation.

Townley was first tied to the Letelier investigation when he was identified as one of two persons who traveled to the U.S. about a month before Letelier's murder on official Chilean passports and met with anti-Castro Cubans believed by investigators to be involved in the murder plot.

Townley was produced by Chilean officials for questioning after U.S. officials warned that diplomatic relations could be broken off if Chile failed to cooperate. The second person who sources said traveled to the U.S. before Letelier's murder was Chilean Army Capt. Armando Fernandez Larios. He has also been described by federal investigators as being a DINA agent.

Because of his Chilean nationality, however, Larios cannot be sought by U.S. authorities for extradition unless formal charges are brought against him.

U.S. officials immediately asked Chile's cooperation in gaining access to Townley. FBI agents arrested him on a material witness warrant, and he arrived in the U.S. the first weekend in April.

Townley is still an American citizen although he has lived in Chile for 21 years. He has a Chilean wife and two children who live in Chile.

Since his arrival in the U.S., Townley has been treated more like a witness than a defendant. Government officials have said they believe he is in danger, and he has been held under tight security precautions—including the use of reportedly bombproof vehicles to transport him and keeping him in undisclosed locations.

Townley has been described in Chile as a staunch opponent of the Marxist regime of Salvador Allende, the Chilean president whom Letelier served as ambassador to the U.S.

Allende's rule was toppled by the military junta in 1973, and he was replaced by Pinochet. Pinochet has denied any involvement in the Letelier assassination, and has made several attempts to dispel the image of Chile as a repressive state. The DINA secret

police apparatus has become the symbol for critics of the regime's brutality.

The former head of DINA, Gen. Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, has been moved out of his government post within recent months by Pinochet and DINA has been given a new name and has been described by the government as now concentrating on political intelligence.

Sources in Chile said Townley, an electrician, participated in several anti-Allende commando raids and was indicted for his participation in one such raid in which a night watchman was killed. Pinochet's government never pressed that case, however.

Prosecutor Propper said in court Wednesday when formal charges were placed against Townley that the expatriate had traveled to the U.S. several times using falsified passports and aliases.

On some of those trips, Townley is reported to have purchased electronic equipment—including surveillance gear—on behalf of DINA.