

Eight Indicted

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

After a 22-month investigation, a federal grand jury here yesterday indicted the former head of Chile's secret police (DINA) and seven others in the bombing death of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier on Washington's Embassy Row.

The indictment of Gen. Juan Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, a close associate of Chilean President Augusto Pinochet, was believed to be the first ever returned in the United States against a high official of a foreign country's intelligence agency.

Contreras, two DINA operatives in Chile and five Cuban exiles living in

the United States were charged by the grand jury with plotting, carrying out and covering up the September 1976 murder of Letelier, a prominent and outspoken critic of the Chilean government at the time. The explosion that ripped through Letelier's 1975 Chevelle also killed an aide, Ronni K. Moffitt, and injured her husband.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugene M. Propper said yesterday that the U.S. Government would ask Chile for the immediate arrest and jailing for extradition of Contreras, DINA operations director Pedro Espinoza Bravo, and DINA agent Armando Fernandez Larios.

Chilean officials had no immediate response to that request, which ap-

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 1978

in Letelier Slaying

prently is unprecedented in diplomatic and judicial channels.

The indictment accuses Espinoza of ordering the assassination during a meeting in Chile and Fernandez of coming to the United States to spy on Letelier so that the assassins would know when to strike.

The Cubans, members of the New Jersey-based Cuban Nationalist Movement, a militant anti-Castro group, are accused of helping to carry out the bombing.

The 15-page indictment was explicitly detailed because of the cooperation with U.S. authorities of American-born DINA agent Michael V. Townley, who has agreed to plead guilty to planting the bomb.

The indictment outlines with precision the alleged plot that resulted in the 9:30 a.m. blast on Sept. 21, 1976, on the placid Sheridan Circle area of embassies, chanceries and diplomats' homes.

Letelier was killed instantly when the bomb atop the A-frame of his car ripped up through the floorboards under his legs as he drove around the circle. He was on his way to work at the Institute for Policy Studies, where he had become internationally known for his outspoken criticism of the Chilean military regime.

Ronni Moffitt was sitting on the passenger's side of the front seat. She died a few seconds after the blast as she staggered from the shattered,

burning car. Her husband, and IPS co-worker, Michael Moffitt, suffered slight injuries.

The Letelier car came to rest against a Volkswagen parked within 100 yards of the Chilean ambassador's residence, and set the stage for a massive worldwide FBI investigation into the first diplomatic assassination here.

Letelier's coworkers, and others in leftist circles, immediately accused DINA, at the time the focus of allegations of massive human rights viola-

See **LETELIER, A10, Col. 1**

Backgrounds of the principals in the Letelier indictments. Page A11.

LETELIER, From A1

ations and torture of political prisoners, of the bombing. They said DINA was concerned about the continuing attention that Letelier was able to focus on the Pinochet regime, and silenced him for that reason.

The FBI, with help from the D.C. Police Department, began the intensive lab work and search of the bomb scene. Its agents began the first of thousands of interviews, weeding out the possibility of domestic plots and other suspects before focusing on political motivations.

The Justice Department worked out careful alliances with the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency to allow their cooperation with the investigation. Within a month of the blast, the investigation was centered on the Cuban Nationalist Movement and the allegation by a jailed international terrorist that two CNM members—Ignacio Novo Sampol and Guillermo Novo Sampol—were involved in the plot.

The Novos, known for their firing of a bazooka at the United Nations in 1964 when Che Guevara was speaking there, were brought before the grand jury and questioned. Yesterday's indictment accuses them of committing perjury when they told that grand jury that they did not know anything about Letelier, DINA or the slaying.

P

A few months later, another Cuban Nationalist Movement leader, Jose Dionisio Suarez Esquivel, was called before the same grand jury and granted immunity from prosecution if he would testify about his alleged involvement in the plot. He refused, and was jailed for contempt of court for 11 months until that particular grand jury's term expired this year.

In February 1978, prosecutor Propser and lead FBI agent L. Carter Cornick decided to make a public request to Chile that the country produce for questioning two men who had traveled to the United States on official Chilean passports and had met with Cuban suspects in the plot.

Chile denied the existence of the two men, but after The Washington Star obtained and published the photographs of the men they were quickly identified as DINA agents Townley and Fernandez.

The United States was able to pressure Chile into turning Townley—an American citizen who grew up in Chile while his father headed a U.S. auto firm there—over to them. Once he arrived in the United States, Townley agreed to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to murder Letelier. He spent day after day telling FBI agents and prosecutors the additional details they needed to charge others in the plot.

According to the indictment returned yesterday, the plot began in July 1976 when DINA chief Contreras asked the Paraguayan military intelligence service director to authorize the

issuance of Paraguayan passports for two DINA agents to use on an unspecified secret mission to the United States.

Contreras then ordered Fernandez to go to Paraguay to meet with that country's military intelligence agency in connection with a two-man mission, about which Espinoza would give him more details, the indictment said.

Espinoza gave false identification materials to Fernandez for the Paraguayan trip to pick up the passports, and Fernandez called Townley to arrange for Espinoza to meet him, according to the indictment.

At a second meeting that month, Espinoza told Townley that he and Fernandez "were being ordered to go to the United States on a DINA mission to assassinate Orlando Letelier," the indictment stated.

After the two men obtained Paraguayan passports, Contreras ordered Fernandez to travel to the United States in August on a DINA mission, the indictment alleges, and Espinoza gave him a ticket to the United States, where Fernandez and another DINA agent arrived on Aug. 28 to begin surveillance of Letelier.

On Sept. 7, 1976, according to the indictment, Espinoza sent Townley to the United States to "carry out the previously discussed mission to assassinate Orlando Letelier."

Townley, using a passport in the name of Hans Petersen Silva, arrived at Kennedy International Airport on Sept. 9 and got the Letelier surveillance information from Fernandez, the indictment said.

Then, according to the indictment, the following acts occurred over the next two weeks:

Sept. 9—Townley, driving an Avis rental car, went to New Jersey to meet with CNM leader Virgilio Paz Romero and asked him to set up a meeting with Guillermo Novo.

Sept. 10—Townley met in New Jersey with Guillermo Novo and Suarez and "requested their assistance" in his DINA orders to assassinate Letelier.

Sept. 13—Townley outlined the Letelier murder plot to members of the governing council of the CNM during a meeting at the Chateau Renaissance motel in North Bergen, N.J. Alvin Ross Diaz, another CNM leader, joined the others at this meeting.

Sept. 15—Guillermo Novo and Suarez gave Townley and Paz explosives and a remote-control detonating device.

Sept. 16—Paz and Townley drove to the District and checked into a Holiday Inn in Northeast Washington.

Sept. 17—Additional wires and other elements of a bomb were purchased by Paz and Townley at a Sears Roebuck and Co. store in Northeast Washington.

Sept. 18—Novo, Suarez and Ross got additional bomb parts in New Jersey, and Suarez drove to the District of Columbia to join Paz and Townley. Suarez registered at the Best Western



MICHAEL MOFFITT
... "we feel vindicated"

Envoy Motel on New York Avenue NE.

Sept. 18—Paz, Suarez and Townley constructed the bomb in a Washington motel room.

Sept. 19—In the early morning hours, Paz, Suarez Townley drove to Letelier's house in Bethesda, and Townley crawled under the car and strapped the bomb into place.

Sept. 19—Townley called his wife, Mariana Ines Callegas de Townley, who also was a DINA agent, in Santiago to have her tell DINA the bomb was in place.

Sept. 19—Townley flew back to New Jersey and was picked up by Ross. They met with Guillermo Novo, and Townley flew to Miami.

Sept. 21—The bomb exploded, and investigators surmised it was detonated by Suarez, the only member of the assassination team remaining in Washington. Later that day, Townley called Ignacio Novo in Florida and Novo told him that "Something had happened in the District of Columbia." Novo and Townley met in Florida, where Novo was briefed on the mission.

Sept. 23—Townley flew back to Chile from Florida.

Sept. 24—"Within the Republic of Chile, Michael Townley advised Pedro Espinoza that the DINA mission to assassinate Orlando Letelier had been carried out," the indictment states.

The indictment specifically charges the three Chileans and four of the Cubans—all but Ignacio Novo—with conspiracy to murder Letelier and the murder of Letelier under federal statutes, murder of Letelier under local statutes, murder of Moffitt under local statutes, and murder by use of explosives under federal statute. Each count carries a possible life sentence.

Guillermo Novo and Ignacio Novo are charged with two counts each of lying to a grand jury, and Ignacio Novo was charged with failing to tell law enforcement authorities about the crime after it occurred—a federal

charge known as misprision of a felony.

Yesterday's indictment before U.S. District Chief Judge William B. Bryant ended 22 months of often pessimistic waiting by Michael Moffitt and others who had closely watched the progress of the investigation.

Moffitt, 27, was sitting in his office at the Institute for Policy Studies when the official news of the indictment arrived.

He said he was "satisfied, but there's still more to be done" in terms of seeing how diligent the United States will be in making sure the charges against the Chilean officials are tried.

"I hate to say, 'I told you so,'" Moffitt said, but "we feel vindicated (by the charges against DINA). We knew who was responsible and we never changed that."

IPS staffers, whose leftist think tank was infiltrated and otherwise spied on by the FBI and police during the antiwar years, early in the case publicly doubted the willingness of the FBI and other U.S. agencies to solve a crime against a leftist diplomat such as Letelier.

"It was difficult for a while until there was some kind of trust—not trust in the mushy sense, but respect," Moffitt said. He said FBI agent Cornick and prosecutor Propper are "decent people. Cornick is a damn good cop... there are obviously good cops in the FBI and Carter Cornick is one of them. We weren't trying to sell them our whole political program. We just wanted to see justice done."

Moffitt said that he now lives "out of a coffee cup and out of a beer glass and it's no substitute for a marriage. My work (anti-Chilean junta activities) is my life because the junta was responsible for the death of my wife."

He and Ronni Moffitt had been married for four months before the bombing.

Letelier had been imprisoned by the military regime after the fall of Marxist Chilean president Salvador Allende in a 1973 military coup. But after his release from a one-year prison term, he had returned to Washington—where he had served Allende as ambassador to the United States—and built up a strong following in leftist political circles.

His wife, Isabel Letelier, was vacationing in Martha's Vineyard, Mass., yesterday and could not be reached for comment.

U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert and his top aides, all of whom were present when the indictment was brought yesterday, praised the investigation of the case by the FBI and its Washington field office. He also commended the work by Propper and Assistant U.S. Attorney E. Lawrence Barcella Jr., the two prosecutors who will try the case before U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker.

Ross, Ignacio Novo and Guillermo Novo have already been arrested on Letelier-related charges and are in custody. Paz and Suarez are fugitives, and warrants have been issued for their arrest.

Also contributing to this story was Washington Post staff writer Lawrence Meyer.

U.S. Extradition Request Expected to Face Hurdles

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — While the Foreign Ministry was presented with a U.S. diplomatic note yesterday asking the arrest of Chile's former security police chief and two other agents on murder charges, expert observers felt chances are slight that the men will be extradited as requested.

They believe it possible, however, that a trial will be held here for retired Brig. Gen. Juan Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, Col. Pedro Espinosa Bravo and Capt. Armando Fernandez Larlos.

Informed sources said Foreign Minister Hernan Cubillos received the U.S. note from Charles Grover, deputy chief of mission. Ambassador George Landau is traveling outside Santiago.

The Chileans were included for murder yesterday by a Washington grand jury in connection with the 1976 bomb killings there of exiled Chilean Socialist Orlando Letelier and an American co-worker.

The 1902 extradition treaty between Chile and the United States provides that each country will deliver persons charged with crimes in the other country, but it says neither country is bound to hand over its own citizens.

Under a later Pan American Convention of 1933, Chile obligated itself to try its own citizens if it does not extradite them and if the only reason for not extraditing is that they are Chilean citizens.

The government of President Augusto Pinochet ignored requests by The Associated Press during the past month for the chance to discuss Chilean extradition customs and procedures with a court or government expert.

Other sources said the procedure

would be somewhat like this: after arrest, the extradition request will make its way to the Chilean supreme court, which is then responsible for conducting hearings to determine the validity in Chilean jurisprudence of evidence made available by the United States.

If the court finds validity in the charges, then Contreras, Espinosa and Fernandez must either be extradited for trial in the United States or be brought to trial here. A Chilean investigation is already underway.

Apparently no special treatment is accorded military officers under the two extradition agreements.

It is understood that Chile generally chooses not to extradite its own citizens, but diplomatic sources said they believe it was done in at least one previous case.

A member of the four-man ruling military junta other than Pinochet recently told a journalist he felt certain Chile would not hand Contreras over to the United States.

A diplomatic source said the only reason he could see why Chile might agree to extradition was that the rest of the world would not believe the three were getting an unbiased trial here.

The Chilean court system has by tradition been independent and respected. The junta has no decrees limiting the court's independence as such, but anti-government lawyers claim the court is practicing a form of self-restriction.

The supreme court, for example, was hesitant to investigate accusations against the Contreras-run DINA. A former court president has complained that dina agents blocked whatever attempts were made to investigate.

THE WITNESS

Townley: He Followed Orders

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Michael Vernon Townley, a soft-spoken, intense and articulate 35-year-old man who has made Chile his home for the past 20 years already is starting to be known in some circles as the "John Dean" of the Letelier affair.

He is an unlikely figure to be found in his current role—as the heavily guarded informant who has calmly told FBI agents and prosecutors how he followed orders to plant an explosive whose blast left its intended victim so mangled that hardened investigators became sick at the scene of the crime.

As he is described by people who know him, Townley is a skilled electronic technician capable of assembling devices to detonate bombs by remote control. He had been active in commando raids against the late Chilean President Salvador Allende, whose Marxist regime was toppled in a military coup by the current Chilean president, Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Townley, an American who grew up in Chile where his father headed a large U.S. automobile operation, had become a familiar sight to Americans there by the early 1970s. He was known as a political activist who was suspected of participating in military activities of Patria y Libertad, a right-wing Chilean party.

Although he had been charged with murder for his alleged participation in a Concepcion raid in which a night watchman was killed, the charges were dropped when Pinochet came to power in late 1973 and Townley became an agent of DINA, the Chilean secret police agency.

Townley reportedly viewed his DINA role as that of a soldier, a man who followed orders. He is said to have worked at high levels—often

meeting directly with DINA chief Manuel Contreras Sepulveda before carrying out a mission—and went about his "business" in a calm, professional manner.

His wife is a Chilean and was also a DINA agent, according to yesterday's indictment. She is known for her flamboyant expressions of political ideology. Townley, on the other hand, has soft blue eyes and a disquietingly peaceful demeanor, according to persons who have seen him in his new role as a cooperative government witness.

Townley was expelled from Chile in early April after the U.S. put intense pressure on the country to turn him over. In the U.S., his attorneys, Seymour Glänzer and Barry W. Levine, struck up a deal by which he would enter a guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to murder Letelier and would in return cooperate in the Letelier investigation.

The deal apparently was made in hopes of a possible early parole for Townley. In the meantime, he is being escorted under heavy guard and in strictest secrecy to protect him from harm while in custody.

As a part of the deal, Townley will only have to cooperate with and provide information to U.S. authorities on his role in the Letelier murder. He reportedly has additional information about terrorist activities in other countries, but is not required to give that information to the U.S., sources have said.

As was John Dean in the Watergate affair, Townley was, by his own account, directly involved in the execution of crimes and has decided to testify against his close associates. And, as in Watergate, Townley could, as did Dean, play a central role in questioning the activities of a country's highest government officials.

THE CUBANS

Men of Long-Held Political Passions

By Christopher Dickey
Washington Post Staff Writers

They are veterans of a long, lost war, the five Cubans indicted yesterday for their alleged part in the murder of a former Chilean ambassador. They are men familiar with the darkest sides of life in the Cuban communities of New Jersey and Miami, where crime and conspiracy often blend with intense political hatreds.

Their passions burned like fuses.

The names Ignacio Novo Sampol and Guillermo Novo Sampol have long been familiar to many members of the Cuban exile community in the United States, and to the federal agents who keep an eye on its counter-revolutionary underworld.

When Che Guevara spoke at the United Nations in 1964, the Novo brothers were charged with firing a bazooka at the U.N. building. Charges were dropped because they had not been warned of their rights.

During the 1970s, Ignacio Novo would be picked up on other explosives-related charges, according to New Jersey court records, while his younger brother Guillermo would be



IGNACIO NOVO SAMPOL
... widely known in exile community

convicted of plotting to blow up a Cuban ship anchored in Montreal.

Though by then they had lived in the United States for almost two decades, they and their three indicted compatriots—Alvin Ross Diaz, Virgilio Paz Romero, and Jose Dionisio Suarez Esquivel—were members of the Cuban Nationalist Movement, determined to carry on the fight against Castro no matter what the odds, and without any help from the United States.

According to yesterday's indictment, four of these Cubans met with DINA agent Michael Vernon Townley early in September 1976. Guillermo Novo and Jose Dionisio Suarez gave him and Virgilio Paz explosives and a detonating device two days later.

Orlando Letelier died in a bomb blast that destroyed his car on Sept. 21.

THE CHILEANS

DINA Officials Inspired Fear

By Christopher Dickey
Washington Post Staff Writer

There were many people in Chile who believed that Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, the first and only head of the Directorate of National Intelligence, was the second most powerful man in the country. He was certainly one of the most feared.

Before it was dissolved last year, his agency, known as DINA, was blamed for the disappearance and torture of thousands of people as it sought to fortify the strength of the military junta and suppress its opposition, both in Chile and abroad.

As head of DINA, Contreras was answerable only to Chilean President Augusto Pinochet, with whom he reputedly was on intimate terms.

On March 21 of this year, however, as international criticism of Chile's human rights record mounted, and the investigation of Orlando Letelier's murder heated up, Contreras resigned from the Army and all government posts he had held since DINA was abolished. No official explanation for the resignation was given.

Contreras is accused in the indictment of having ordered Letelier's assassination, but the man the indictment charges with most of the plotting and supervision for the operation is Pedro Espinoza, a colonel in the Chilean army and currently commander of a garrison in southern Chile. At the time of Letelier's death, Espinoza was director of operations for DINA. Little else is known about him, though according to several sources familiar with Chilean politics, it had been widely suspected that Espinoza was in charge of stifling criticism from exiled members of the former government.

Armando Fernandez Larios, the man accused of organizing the actual assassination of Letelier, and, with Michael Vernon Townley, contacting and coordinating the activities of the Cuban exiles involved, is a captain in Chile's army.

The son of a retired Air Force general, he took part in the storming of the Moneda Palace during the 1973 coup, and now works at the Ministry of Defense in Santiago.