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Alleged Heroin King Relaxes

AP/W
Associated Press

ASUNCION, Paraguay—The man the U.S. government says is the kingpin of heroin-smuggling from Latin America sits in a jail cell with a painting and photographs on the walls.

He wears an orange, black and white sports shirt, light blue slacks and highly polished loafers.

"Do I look like I deal in narcotics?" asks Auguste Joseph Ricord, arms folded across his chest.

The 61-year-old Frenchman looks like a balding grandfather. He is short and wiry, an endless talker, who removes his glasses frequently and points with them to emphasize what he considers to be the holes in the case brought by the United States to extradite him.

One Paraguayan court rejected the U.S. extradition request. A three-judge court of final appeal is to rule by mid-July.

If extradition is granted, a U.S. Air Force jet is scheduled to fly Ricord direct to New York City for trial in U.S. District Court on conspiracy charges.

"I do not understand the accusations against me; they are a mystery . . . they are lies," Ricord said in a recent interview.

"Paul Boulard asked me if I knew drug people. I said yes. How could I not know them. I have restaurants in Buenos Aires and Asuncion.

in Cell, Fights Extradition

I could not help knowing people who ate in my restaurants."

Boulard is a special agent of the U.S. Customs Service. According to his sworn testimony on file in the Paraguayan courts, Boulard's investigation led to Ricord's indictment in March 1971 by a federal grand jury in New York City.

At the request of the U.S. government, Ricord was arrested here a few days later by Paraguayan police, and

Boulard flew to Paraguay to interview him.

For 15 months, Ricord's home has been a 10-by-12-foot cell in a special wing of Asuncion's state penitentiary. In contrast to the drab surroundings, the walls of Ricord's cell are filled with posters and paintings of France, which Ricord has not seen in 25 years.

He was sentenced to death in absentia for having collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. He also has a police record in Ar-

gentina, where he lived until moving to Paraguay in 1968.

Ricord's cell also has photos of his family, including a snapshot of a woman and girl in bikinis beside the swimming pool at the Paris-Niza Hotel, which he owns. One is his 15-year-old daughter, Josefina, a schoolgirl in Asuncion, who "believes in my innocence." The other is Ricord's niece, Miss Elena Ana Bonsignour, 33. She brings her uncle meals each day.