

Mexico Says Fugitive Fled to the U.S.

AUG 21 1971

NYTimes

By United Press International

MEXICO CITY, Aug. 20—The Mexican police asked the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation today to seek and arrest a New Yorker who escaped by helicopter on Wednesday from a federal penitentiary here.

At the same time, the American's lawyer asserted that he

was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency.

According to the Mexican Attorney General's office, the escaped prisoner, Joel David Kaplan, 42 years old, was picked up mysteriously by helicopter, transferred to a small plane at a hidden airfield about 100 miles north of Mexico City and headed for the United States.

With him, the office said, was Carlos Antonio Contreras Castro, a Venezuelan counterfeiter, who headed for Guatemala from the secret airfield.

Secret Mission Cited

Kaplan was serving a 28-year sentence for the premeditated murder in 1961 of a business associate, Luis M. Vidal of New York. Contreras Castro, 35 years old, was serving nine years for counterfeiting and forgery.

Mr. Victor Velázquez, Kaplan's defense attorney, said in an interview that he never doubted that his client was a C.I.A. agent, who had come to Mexico in 1961 on a secret mission. Kaplan entered Mexico with a false British passport in 1961, the police said.

But one police official, who preferred not to give his name, said that Mexican police never tried to link Kaplan with the Central Intelligence Agency. "We just wanted to prove that

he was Vidal's murderer," he said.

A few years ago, the J. M. Kaplan Fund of New York, of which Kaplan's uncle, J. M. Kaplan is president, was accused by members of the House of Representatives of being a conduit for Central Intelligence Agency funds although the United States Embassy in Mexico

In Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, the police chief reported that he had information from the police in Brownsville, Tex., that Kaplan had boarded yet another small plane there for Sausalito, Calif.

One of the plane pilots was identified by Mexican police as Orville Dale of Brownsville.

They identified the pilot of the helicopter as Roger Guy Herschner, of Glendora, Calif. The helicopter was rented in Casper, Wyo., they said.

The police also sought a man and a woman seen in a car whose lights lit the airfield where the fugitive switched to the first light plane.

The police also continued questioning the guards and inmates at Santa Marta Acatitla Prison, from which the men escaped. They have theorized that the two must have had inside help, since not a shot was fired nor was the alarm system sounded.



Associated Press
Joel David Kaplan in a photograph taken in 1963.