

2 Cubans called 'blabbermouths'

By ROMAN CZAJKOWSKY

Dispatch Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—Two Cuban defendants in the Orlando Letelier murder trial were blabbermouths who concealed little about the Cuban Nationalist Movement, talking about the anti-Castro group's alleged role in the murder and purported plans to blow up Russian ships in American ports, two of their former jailmates said yesterday.

One defendant, Alvin Ross, "will talk and talk and talk as long as you're able to listen... There were times when I had to run away from him," said Sherman Kaminsky, who was being held in the Metropolitan Correction Center in Manhattan with Ross last year.

While in the same jail, Guillermo Novo allegedly told inmate Antonio Polyterides: "Yes, our group is responsible for the bombing" of Letelier.

The two informants' testimony about conversations they had with the Cuban exiles was presented to U.S.

Judge told Ross and Novo boasted of CNM's role in Letelier murder

District Court Judge Barrington Parker during legal arguments with the jury absent.

Defense lawyers said Kaminsky and Polytarides should not be allowed to testify before the jury because, they charged, the two were illegally set up to pump the defendants about the Letelier case.

Parker is scheduled to rule on their request Monday.

Ross and Novo are on trial on charges of conspiracy to murder and murder in connection with the 1976 assassination of Letelier. The third defendant, Ignacio Novo, Guillermo's brother, is charged with perjury and with not telling police about the crime.

All three are leading members of the Union City-based CNM, the group the government contends helped the Chilean secret police carry out Letelier's assassination. Letelier was an outspoken critic of Chile's military junta at the time of his death.

In his testimony yesterday, Kaminsky said Ross on one occasion told him about plans to "tie motorboats, load them with explosives and, by remote control, blow up Russian ships in American waters."

He also said Ross once told him about three persons "assassination attempts" on Fidel Castro.

Kaminsky said he took that information to his lawyer, who in turn informed the FBI about it. He said he did so "because I felt he (Ross) was a dangerous individual who could create an international incident."

The Novo brothers in the 1960s pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the bombing of a Russian merchant ship in Canadian waters. Both received probation.

Kaminsky, who was facing four extortion charges while in the Manhattan jail, said that "at no time" was he promised leniency in return for his testimony. Instead, he asserted, he decided to talk "because, in my mentality, Alvin Ross Diaz stands for everything that I dislike in a human being."

Kaminsky recently received probation on two of the charges against him, and is expected to get probation on the outstanding charges as well, sources said.

Prosecution attorneys yesterday also indicated Kaminsky would testify about what Ross said about the Letelier murder.

Prosecutors also disclosed that Polytarides, the other informant, had been set up at the Corrections Center by U.S. Customs Bureau agents to entrap inmates who knew about Polytarides' past involvement in illegal arms sales and who wanted to set up deals with him.

Among those who wanted to buy weapons, Polytarides alleged, was a Cuban who wanted to buy 10 machine guns, "five for his group and five for another Cuban group who was responsible for the Letelier bombing."

Introduced to Guillermo Novo later, Polytarides claimed he greeted him by saying "I know who you are," to which Novo allegedly replied "Yes, our group is responsible for the bombing" of Letelier.

Polytarides said Novo wanted to buy machine guns, plastic explosives, and fragmentation grenades.

Polytarides said Novo at that time told him "they had been betrayed by certain people in his case but they would pay them back."