

U.S.: We 'expect' extradition of Letelier slay suspects

WASHINGTON—The State Department said yesterday it "clearly expects" that the Chilean agents alleged to be involved in the 1976 assassination of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier will be brought to trial.

Department spokesman Hodding Carter issued the statement after the chief prosecutor for the Chilean Supreme Court, Gustavo Chamorro, said he will recommend that three Chilean secret police agents not be tried in Chile.

Chamorro also said he will recommend rejection of a U.S. request for the extradition of the three agents, Gen. Manuel Contreras, Col. Pedro Espinoza and Capt. Armando Fernandez.

Five Union City Cuban exiles have already been indicted in the case, four of them for murder. Guillermo

Novo Sampol and Alvin Ross Diaz were convicted of murder and sentenced to life terms last month. Novo's brother, Ignacio, was convicted of covering up the crime and was sentenced to eight years. Virgilio Paz and Dionisio Suarez are still being sought in connection with the slaying.

Referring to the extradition plea, Carter said that in the absence of a ruling by Chilean Chief Judge Israel Borquez, it would be premature to comment on recommendations.

"Let me say that we clearly expect that the persons involved in this case will, in fact, appear before a court of justice," Carter added.

Asked to elaborate, Carter said he did not intend that statement to be a prediction of what the Chilean

authorities will do but that it was rather an expression of what the United States thinks ought to be done.

The three Chilean agents were accused by Michael Townley, an American who lived in Chile and who was the U.S. government's chief witness in the trial that convicted the Cuban exiles.

Letelier, who held three cabinet posts in the administration of the late Marxist President Salvador Allende, was killed along with a colleague in a car-bombing on a Washington street. Letelier was an outspoken critic of Chile's military junta that overthrew and killed Allende in 1973. —(AP)