

Ex-Agent Sentenced in Chile Diplomat's Death

WASHINGTON (AP)—Michael Vernon Townley, a former Chilean agent, was sentenced Friday to serve 40 months to 10 years in prison for planting the car bomb that killed former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier and an aide.

U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker stuck to a sentencing agreement Townley made with prosecutors last Aug. 11, when he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to murder a foreign official.

Parker said if Townley had not fulfilled his part of the plea-bargaining arrangement by testifying for the government in the trial of Letelier's assassins, he "would be a prime candidate for the maximum penalty."

Townley could have received a life term, as did two anti-Castro Cubans who were convicted of having played roles in an international conspiracy to murder Letelier. A third anti-Castro Cuban received an eight-year prison term. All three defendants in the trial are appealing.

Townley had admitted he recruited the Cubans to help in the assassination, which was devised by Townley's former employer, the Chilean secret police agency once called DINA.

Parker noted Townley testified he had no regrets about killing Letelier—a former Chilean ambassador to the United States—because both of them were soldiers fighting for their beliefs. "Today, do you have any regrets or remorse?" Parker asked Townley.

Replying in a voice that was barely audible, Townley said, "I feel a great sense of remorse" about the innocent killing of Letelier's aide, Ronnie Moffitt, a passenger in Letelier's car when the remote-control bomb ripped through the floor board as it rounded Sheridan Circle here on Sept. 21, 1976.

As for Letelier, Townley said, "if I could turn back the clock I would voice my objections" to DINA superiors and "find a reason not to participate."

Townley said he now feels "violence is not the solution to a dispute." Under Townley's plea-bargaining agree-

ment, prosecutors said they would recommend parole after the minimum sentence is served.

Townley's sentencing had been postponed earlier while the FBI investigated a mysterious phone call Townley admitted making during the trial from a prosecutor's phone.

A tape of that call to a friend in Chile had Townley calling Parker "badly educated" and saying "I offer right now to ask friends all over the world to call him (Parker) and threaten him and get him to withdraw from the case."

Townley told Parker on Friday he did make derogatory remarks about the judge, and he apologized. But Townley added the recording was not accurate in regard to the alleged threat, because certain parts of the conversation were not in the tape.

Parker said the phone call could lead to further action against Townley. But the call had no impact on the sentencing Friday.

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