

# Defendants Allege CIA Connection in Letelier's Killing

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WASHINGTON — Federal prosecutors argued Wednesday that defense claims of CIA involvement in the assassination of Orlando Letelier should be discounted unless the defense can supply supporting evidence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lawrence Barcella said the three defendants should not be permitted to tell a jury that the CIA was behind the bombing assassination until they could support the allegation with testimony.

The arguments were made during a bench conference among federal prosecutors, defense attorneys and District Court Judge Barrington Parker Jr. Although the conference was private, The Herald obtained a copy of the transcript.

**LETELIER**, a former Chilean foreign minister, died Sept. 21, 1976, when a remote-controlled bomb strapped beneath his car exploded as he drove to work in downtown Washington. Letelier was living here in exile after being expelled from his native Chile after a military coup there.

Five Cuban exiles — including two who remain fugitives — and three top-level Chilean secret police officials are charged in connection with the assassination. The Chilean officials have not been extradited to stand trial.

Federal prosecutors say that the killing was ordered by the Chilean secret police, called DINA, and carried out by the Cuban exile defendants under the direction of DINA agent Michael Townley, an American expatriate. The motive for the crime was to silence Letelier's criticism of the Chilean junta, they contend.

Townley, who has already pleaded guilty to the killing, is the government's key witness. He is scheduled to begin testifying soon, possibly as early as today.

**DEFENSE ATTORNEYS** for the three defendants — Guillermo and Ignacio Novo Sampol, who are brothers, and Alvin Ross Diaz — told jurors on the trial's first day that they would show Townley was actually a CIA double-agent planted inside DINA.

They also argued that the assassination was masterminded by the CIA because the agency considered Letelier a threat to U.S. interests in Chile.

But they offered no evidence to support that defense other than to recite the CIA's highly publicized involvement in the 1973 coup that toppled the Marxist government of Salvador Allende. Letelier was a cabinet minister in the Allende government.

Federal prosecutors apparently fear that defense attorneys will call CIA officials as witnesses and thus force them to plead the Fifth



— United Press International

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Amendment as a means of avoiding the disclosure of sensitive information to jurors.

The defense attorneys could then attempt to persuade the jury that

the CIA refusal to testify was an effort to cover up its role.

Judge Parker delayed ruling on the prosecution's motion that such a tactic be prohibited.