

Letelier Murder Case Is Sent to the Jury

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WASHINGTON — The case against three militant Cubans charged in connection with the bombing assassination of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier went to the jury late Tuesday, nearly five weeks after the trial began.

The jury of seven women and five men retired to deliberate at 3:30 p.m. after hearing final rebuttal arguments from federal prosecutors and a 2½-hour instruction from U.S. District Judge Barrington Parker Jr.

Two hours later, the jury sent a note to Parker asking for several exhibits. Among them were prosecution charts detailing the chain of evidence against the defendants and copies of plea agreements made by the government with three informants in return for the testimony.

The judge dismissed the jurors for the night shortly before 7 p.m. He asked them to return at 9 a.m.

THE THREE anti-Castro Cubans — Ignacio and Guillermo Novo Sampoi, brothers, and Alvin Ross Diaz — are among eight persons named in the indictment for taking part in the assassination or carrying out a coverup.

Letelier, former Chilean ambas-

sador to the United States, had become a critic of the Chilean regime that seized power in a military coup. He and a young co-worker, Ronni Moffitt, died Sept. 21, 1976, when a bomb exploded beneath Letelier's car.

According to prosecution testimony, the Chilean secret police agency DINA sent its American-born agent, Michael Townley, to assassinate Letelier with help from the militant Cuban Nationalist Movement.

TOWNLEY, a one-time Miami auto mechanic, has pleaded guilty and admitted building the bomb that blew up Letelier's car. He was the prosecution's key witness against his alleged Cuban accomplices.

The defense, meanwhile, has contended that the three Cubans were scapegoats framed by Townley.

Two of the three — Guillermo Novo and Ross — are charged with five counts of murder or conspiracy to murder.

Although neither was with Townley when the bomb exploded, Parker told the jury that, under conspiracy law, their alleged participation in the plot makes them fully liable. Each murder count carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.



Letelier's Widow

... outside courthouse

IGNACIO NOVO, who lives in Miami, is charged only with participation in a coverup. He allegedly made two false statements to a grand jury investigating the murders and also is charged with failure to report his knowledge of the crime to authorities.

Each misstatement carries a penalty of up to five years in jail. The so-called "misprison" allegation — withholding knowledge of a felony — carries a maximum three-year sentence.

Guillermo Novo is also charged with two counts of lying to a grand jury.

Townley has pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to murder a foreign official. He could have been sentenced to life in prison. But in return for his testimony, he was sentenced to three to 10 years.