

U.S. Recalls Chile Ambassador In Wake of Extradition Decision

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WASHINGTON — The State Department Tuesday recalled U.S. Ambassador to Chile George W. Landau for consultations on Chile's refusal to extradite three army officers who allegedly masterminded the assassination here of Orlando Letelier.

The not-unexpected recall appeared to be the first step in a total U.S. review of its relations with the Chilean military junta headed by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. The review could lead to a severing of relations between the two governments.

The recall action was triggered by the Chilean Supreme Court president's refusal earlier this week to honor the U.S. request that Chile extradite the three DINA members. DINA is the name of the now-disbanded secret police of Chile.

THAT REFUSAL also resulted in an attack against the Chilean junta by several American lawmakers and human rights activists. Some of them called for an immediate cut-off of all aid to Chile, a complete break in relations and a trade boycott designed to cripple the already ailing Chilean economy.

A federal grand jury here indicted the three — Gen. Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, Col. Pedro Espinoza and Capt. Armando Fernandez — last August. They were charged with directing the plot to kill Letelier, a former Chilean cabinet minister who lived here in exile, and thus silence his criticism of the military junta.

Letelier and a young American, Ronni Moffitt, died when a bomb built by admitted DINA agent Michael Townley exploded in downtown Washington. Townley has said he was acting under orders from his three superiors at DINA.

State Department spokesman



George Landau
... review of relations

Hodding Carter III, in announcing Landau's recall, attacked the decision by Chilean Supreme Court

President Israel Borquez as being contrary to both the U.S.-Chile extradition treaty and generally accepted standards of justice.

"WE DO NOT believe that yesterday's decision was consistent with international norms of justice," he said.

The State Department also said that the evidence necessary to sustain this country's extradition request was "clearly sufficient" because it was the same evidence that resulted in the convictions and guilty plea of four other persons in connection with Letelier's death.

Carter said that the United States will appeal Borquez' ruling to the full Supreme Court of Chile, and he indicated that the arguments on that appeal would be made in public. So far, all the evidence given by U.S. prosecutors to the Chilean government has been ordered sealed by Chilean courts.

The State Department spokesman said that Landau's "consultation" would include a thorough review of

the future U.S. attitude toward Chile and its military government.

CARTER DECLINED to speculate, however, about whether those discussions would include the breaking of relations with Chile — a step that would be virtually unprecedented between otherwise friendly governments.

He indicated that any reprisal the United States might consider in the future would be held in abeyance until the appeal of Borquez' ruling has been carried out.

Meanwhile, Sens. Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) and Frank Church (D., Idaho), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asked President Carter to suspend all economic, military and financial assistance that now might be en route to Chile.

They also urged the President to withdraw all U.S. military personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Santiago and deny visas to visiting Chilean military and intelligence personnel.