

Cuban terrorists' kind of liberty: 1 dead, 74 to go

That evening, before it grew dark, Carlos Muntz was driving his Volvo down Sauco St. in the San Juan suburb of Guaynabo. Earlier in the day, it had rained, and the evening was cool. The window of his car was open.

The young man was going to visit his mother, who had brought him from Cuba to Puerto Rico as an exile when the boy was 9. Now he was 26. He had gone to school in Puerto Rico, graduated from its university, married a Puerto Rican woman, fathered two children. The bitterness of the older exiles was not part of his life. He had become a member of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, a group of Cuban exiles sympathetic to Fidel Castro, and for more than a year, he had operated Agencia Viajes Varadero, a travel agency specializing in trips to Cuba for those who had chosen exile.

A block and a half from his mother's house, a car pulled around from the rear and started to pass. In the car (variously described as a Cougar or a Cutlass) were three young men. One of them opened fire with a .45 automatic. Seven to nine shots were fired. One of them had through Carl Muntz's head. His car

NY DAILY NEWS
MAY 21, 1979

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went out of control, crashed into a tree and turned over. The car carrying the gunmen sped away. Muntz' mother came out of her house nearby on California St. and she started to scream.

THAT WAS APRIL 28. Carlos Muniz died the next day, without recovering consciousness. Within hours, phone calls were made to exile papers in Miami, claiming the assassination as the work of Grupo Cero. But in the exile community, and in Puerto Rico, they

knew that this was just another name for the band of anti-Castro fanatics known as Omega 7.

"We have killed one," the anonymous voice said. "We will kill 74 more."

That voice was referring to the Committee of 75, a group of Cuban exile leaders of various political sympathies who recognize that after 20 years in power, Fidel Castro is not going away. They have been engaged in a "dialogo" with Fidel since September 1978, and as a result, thousands of political prisoners have been released from Cuban jails and the "Reunification" program has allowed exiles to visit the home country at a rate of 20,000 a month.

THIS IS SEEN as treason by members of Omega 7, and various other interlocking Cuban terrorist groups. Members of the committee have reason to fear Omega 7. They have struck before. Last Friday night, they planted a bomb outside the Cuban government's diplomatic offices in the Czech Embassy in Washington. An air conditioner was blown apart and all the building's windows were broken. Two men with pistols were seen running away after the explosion, but the cops

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couldn't catch them. Nobody has been arrested yet for the killing of Carlos Muniz.

But the two great capers, the ones discussed most passionately late at night along Bergenline Ave in Union City or on Calle Ocho in Little Havana in Miami, are the "airplane" and the death of Orlando Letelier. On Oct. 6, 1976, a Cuban airliner carrying 73 people from Caracas to Barbados was bombed by a group headed by an anti-Castro nut named Orlando Bosch. Everybody was killed. Bosch, who once did time for firing a bazooka at a Polish freighter, was arrested by Venezuelan police and charged in the plot. From jail, he continues to function as head of a group called CORU (Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations). In the Cuban exile community, Omega 7 is thought to be part of the same network.

TWO MEMBERS of Omega 7 were convicted of taking part in the car bombing that killed Letelier on Sept. 21, 1976. This was clearly a contract from the Chilean secret police (DINA), set up in Miami with the help of an American named Michael Townley. Cuban exiles in Miami then recruited members of Omega 7, which is based in northern New Jersey. Their price for taking part was supposedly \$1,000,000, which the exiles needed badly in those months just after the long CIA payday ended.

One of those who took part was a man named Guillermo Novo Sampol, a founder and leader of the "Northern Zone" of the Cuban Nationalist Movement (believed to be a cover for Omega 7). Novo Sampol had been around. In 1964, Guillermo and his brother Ignacio were arrested for firing a bazooka at the UN building from the Queens side of the East River. Ernesto (Che) Guevara was speaking in the building at the time, and the idea was simple: blow the

place up, and kill Che. The rocket landed in the river. The brothers were arrested and later released on a technicality.

In 1974, Guillermo was sentenced to three years for conspiring to place bombs on ships in Canadian ports and in the Cuban consulate in Montreal. The ships were involved in trade with Cuba. Guillermo only did six months. He didn't do as well in the Lettelier case. He was sentenced to life along with one Alvin Ross Diaz, for killing the Chilean.

BUT THE LETELIER CASE was unusual; the killers certainly shared the political philosophy of the Chilean junta but the killing did not directly concern itself with Cuba. Other actions usually have. Carlos Muniz, for example, was apparently an early target. A newspaper called La Cronica, published for Cubans in Puerto Rico, often opens its pages for coded attacks on companies or individuals whose politics it does not like.

On Nov. 14, 1978, there was an interview with "Commander Z," the military chief of Omega 7. He was asked how many members Omega 7 contained, and answered: "We have enough to punish all the traitors and Communists." On Nov. 30, good old Guillermo Novo Sampol chimed in, attacking the dialogue with Fidel:

"Now more than ever we need the revolutionary elements to administer a few punishments similar to those of Nieves and Donestevez to counterattack the coexistentialist attempts. (Luciano Nieves and Ramon Donestevez were assassinated in Miami in 1975 and 1976, respectively, for advocating peaceful relations with Cuba.) On January 5, 1978, a bomb exploded in the offices of Varadero Tours. Carlos Muniz was not there, but La Cronica said: "Our congratulations to the Cuban patriots.

ON DECEMBER 29, 1978, bombs exploded at the Cuban UN Mission at 6 E, 67th St. and at Lincoln Centers by Fisher Hall (for the crime of booking the Orquestra Aragon, one of the greatest Cuban bands). On March 25, bombs exploded at various sites: in luggage about to be loaded on a TWA flight to Los Angeles; at a drugstore called shipping drugs to Cuba; and at the

Almacen el Espanol in Union City (for offices of the New Jersey Cuban Program in Weehawken (for working with those who wanted to visit Cuba).

Omega 7 has been connected to all these jobs and its members are still on the loose. In Union City, most people are too scared to say anything negative about them. But some members of the Committee of 75 are not afraid to speak out. One of them is Jose Arrom, a professor from Yale University. After Muniz was murdered, he said:

"We as representatives of the Cuban community, went to Cuba to talk openly, without commitment. In those three days we were able to achieve the release of 3,600 political prisoners, the reunification of families and the right for Cubans living abroad to visit Cuba. What is wrong with that? Why should we be punished? These people only want liberty for themselves, not for others. They want liberty to threaten and murder others."

Daily News - 5/21/79