

# ***U.S. Said to Weigh Move Against Chile Over Murder Case***

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WASHINGTON, March 3—Top-ranking State and Justice Department officials have suggested that the United States recall its Ambassador in Chile if the Government of President Augusto Pinochet refuses to make two secret police agents available for questioning here in connection with the murder of former Ambassador Orlando Letelier, Administration sources said today.

But they cautioned that even if President Carter supported this relatively drastic sanction, it might not be enough to compel President Pinochet to turn over the men who allegedly arranged the bombing death of Mr. Letelier and his aide, Mrs. Ronni Moffitt, in September 1976.

Meanwhile, the State Department spokesman, Hodding Carter 3d, told reporters, "I simply am not aware of any such threat or position being taken. I can say to you that that kind of threat or possibility has not been raised with the Chileans."

But Mr. Carter and other officials agree that the Letelier case has become a crucial element in United States-Chilean relations.

On Wednesday, Robert J. Lipschutz,

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Continued on Page 3, Column 3

# U.S. Said to Study Sanction on Chile

Continued From Page 1

Mr. Carter's counsel; Robert Pastor, of the National Security Council, and a Justice Department aide met with Isabel Letelier, the ambassador's widow, and Mrs. Moffitt's husband, Michael, and assured them the Administration would do "everything possible" to prosecute the killers in the bombing 17 months ago.

Mr. Moffitt said in an interview that "it was the best meeting we've ever had with Government officials." He said that although the Administration officials made no specific commitments in the 90-minute meeting, he came away encouraged by a new atmosphere of determination to solve the case.

F.B.I. and Justice Department officials said last week that a breakthrough in the case had supplied them the aliases and identities of two Chileans who allegedly came to this country on two occasions in 1976 and arranged with right-wing Cuban extremists here to kill Ambassador Letelier by placing a plastic explosive underneath his car.

Mr. Letelier had been ambassador under President Salvador Allende Gossens and was a leading critic of the military junta that overthrew him.

## Some Critical Reports

Mr. Moffitt said he believed that the prosecutor, Eugene M. Propper, may also have learned the names of other people in the chain of command of the Chilean intelligence organization.

Two other sources, however, said that the Government agents had obtained the names several months ago but apparently demanded that the individuals be made available by the Chilean Government at this time as a last resort.

Moreover, these sources said that F.B.I. and Justice Department investigators had

not fully exploited information available in the files of the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

Justice Department spokesmen have steadfastly refused to comment, but other Justice officials have selectively commented on criticism of the inquiry's progress. One Justice source said the report that they had not fully exploited C.I.A. resources was "implausible and very unlikely."

The two Chilean intelligence agents first entered this country on Paraguayan passports and false visas, but these papers were rejected by the United States. They returned using aliases but carrying Chilean passports and visas issued by American officials in Santiago.

## Request to Chile

The names in the request for cooperation sent to the Chilean Government were Juan William Rose and Alejandro Romeralara, but these are the aliases taken from the second set of papers.

The United States has asked the Chilean Supreme Court to locate and question the two men. Several top-level sources, however, believe that knowledge of the plot to kill Mr. Letelier reaches into the highest levels of the Chilean Government, including Col. Manuel Contreras, the former head of the security police.

"If Contreras knew, President Pinochet knew," said one key Administration source, "and it's unlikely the Chilean Government will surrender two men whose testimony could link the President to murder."

If the United States recalled its ambassador or severed relations with Chile, the greatest effect might be to sharpen rivalries and divisions within the country's power structure. Several sources said that the navy and the air force were rivals of the civilian intelligence agency and might see its involvement in the Letelier case as a chance to reduce its power.