

U.S. RECALLS ENVOY TO CHILE IN PROTEST ON LETELIER INQUIRY

CHARGES LACK OF COOPERATION

Santiago Is Called Unresponsive to Requests in Investigation of Killing of Ex-Diplomat

By **GRAHAM HOVEY**

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WASHINGTON, June 23—The United States recalled its Ambassador to Chile today in a rebuke to that country's military Government, which, it said, had not cooperated satisfactorily in the investigation of the 1976 assassination in Washington of a former Chilean diplomat and Cabinet minister.

"Chilean authorities have not been forthcoming on important requests by the Justice Department which have been pending for some time," said a State Department spokesman, John H. Trattner, in explaining the recall of Ambassador George W. Landau "for consultations."

The requests involve the investigation of the bombing in Washington on Sept. 21, 1976, of an automobile carrying Orlando Letelier, a former Chilean Ambassador to the United States and member of the Cabinet of President Salvador Allende Gossens, and his associate, Ronni K. Moffitt. Mr. Letelier and Mrs. Moffitt were killed.

4 Charged in Case

Michael Vernon Townley, an American who had long resided in Chile, and three Cuban exiles have been charged with conspiracy in connection with the deaths.

Mr. Townley, 35, has agreed to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to murder Mr. Letelier, and has cooperated with the Government in the case since he was charged April 26. Chile had expelled him April 8 under heavy United States pressure.

American investigators have said privately that they expect to obtain Federal grand jury indictments shortly of three Chilean Army officers who are suspected of plotting the assassination of Mr. Letelier, an exile leader and outspoken critic of the military Government that deposed Mr. Allende in 1973.

Sources close to the investigation have identified one of the officers as Gen. Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, the now-retired head of Chile's secret police and a confidant of President Augusto Pinochet.

Requests of Chilean Government

Neither the State Department nor the Justice Department would disclose the requests on which Mr. Trattner said Chile had not been forthcoming.

"We are not asking for the extradition of three people," a State Department official said today. "You don't ask for extradition until people are indicted." He said it could be assumed that the requests were "for information and cooperation short of extradition."

Administration officials had anticipated that in the event that General Contreras and the other officers were indicted here there would be difficulty in obtaining their extradition.

An official at the Justice Department said it had asked for the recall of Ambassador Landau as a signal to Chile that "We're serious about our request for cer-

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tain things that the Chilean Government can provide but refuses to do so."

Although he refused to disclose what the United States was seeking from Chile, it seemed obvious that the Justice Department feared Chile would not agree to turn over General Contreras and the other two officers for trial in the United States.

The official said the Chilean Government had replied, in effect, that "you haven't given us sufficient evidence" for the kind of cooperation that was being requested.

But the Justice Department, the official said, will be ready to provide "all the evidence required to bring about extradition" if it goes before the Supreme Court of Chile with an extradition request.

If the Chilean Government refuses extradition when the time comes, the official said, the Justice Department wants to be "very insistent that these people will be tried seriously in the Chilean courts."

He said that the indictments in the United States "will name the people in DINA who were responsible" for the death of Mr. Letelier. The Chilean secret police agency was known by the initials DINA when General Contreras headed it.

The indictments would also make public the evidence of "how things started in Chile" that led to the assassination in Washington, the Justice Department official said.

Chilean Official 'Not Surprised'

DINA has been accused of political murders, torture and responsibility for disappearances of opponents of the military regime.

Mr. Trattner said that in addition to consultations about the Letelier-Moffitt case, the presence of Ambassador Landau in Washington "will also give us an opportunity to review the current state of human rights conditions in Chile and related issues."

The Justice Department official emphasized, however, that the recall had been requested "totally and exclusively because of Chile's lack of cooperation in the Letelier case."

Chile's Foreign Minister, who is attending the General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Washington, said his Government was "not sur-

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Associated Press

George W. Landau, who is the
United States Ambassador to Chile.

prised" by the recall of Ambassador Landau.

"We think it would be useful that he conveys to his Government what we have told him in Chile," said the Foreign Minister, Hernan Cubillos. He added that Chile was cooperating with the American authorities in the Letelier investigation but said Washington was not providing enough information to support its requests.

In addition to announcing the Ambassador's recall, Mr. Trattner also told a State Department briefing that the Government intended to hold up shipment of fins for bombs that had been ordered by Chile before Congress imposed a ban on military sales to the Santiago Government.

In fact, the shipment had been held up for several weeks by the refusal of West Coast longshoremen to load the bomb fins on the S.S. Seajet in San Francisco.

Mr. Trattner said the bomb fin assemblies would not be loaded "for the time being," while the Government conducted an "assessment" of its relations with Chile.

Since 1975, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union has declared a boycott on all cargo bound for Chile or sent from that country to United States ports.