

Paraguayan Links Chilean General to Letelier Case

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ASUNCION, Paraguay, July 19 — Paraguay's chief of military intelligence has given United States investigators sworn evidence, including a copy of a coded message, linking Gen. Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda, the former chief of Chile's secret police, to the assassination of Orlando Letelier, a Chilean exile leader, in Washington.

The evidence obtained here from Col. Benito Guanes, chief of military intelligence, is regarded as a major step by United States investigators who are hoping to obtain indictments from a Federal grand jury against General Contreras and agents of the Chilean secret police for the bombing that killed Mr. Letelier and Ronni Moffitt, an American assistant, in September 1976.

In a deposition given to an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Colonel Guanes said that he had received a telephone call from General Contreras in 1976, followed by a coded telegram signed by the Chilean secret police chief, asking that Paraguayan passports be issued to two Chilean agents for a clandestine trip to the United States.

This kind of cooperation between the intelligence agencies of the military re-

gimes in South America — particularly those of Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina — is common since they exchange information and cooperate in combating left-wing guerrilla groups that are also structured on regional lines.

In the case of the passports, informed sources said, the Chilean agents presented themselves under the false names of Juan Williams Rose and Alejandro Romeral Jara. The Paraguayan passports were issued, but United States visas were refused because the two men aroused the suspicions of American officials.

A month later, the Chilean Foreign Ministry obtained visas from the United States Consulate in Santiago for two official passports issued in the names used in the Paraguayan passports. These had been canceled by Paraguay after United States visas were refused.

By photographs presented with the passports here, and evidence subsequently obtained in Chile, investigators have determined that the official passports issued in Chile were used by Michael Vernon Townley, an American electronics technician, and Capt. Armando Fernández Larios, of the Chilean Army, to travel to the United States in August 1976.

Mr. Townley, a longtime resident in Chile, was on the payroll of the Chilean secret police, known as the National Intelligence Directorate, or DINA, at that time, and Captain Fernández was assigned to the DINA operations department. His chief was Col. Pedro Espinoza, who reported to General Contreras.

Mr. Townley was taken to the United States in the custody of two F.B.I. agents in March after the United States Government had exerted strong diplomatic pressure on Chile's military Government to cooperate in the Letelier investigation.

According to reports in Washington, Mr. Townley has made statements that acknowledge the placing of a bomb in the automobile of Mr. Letelier, a former Chilean Foreign Minister and ambassador to Washington during the left-wing Government of the late President Salvador Allende Gossens. After spending two years in Chilean jails following the military takeover in 1973, Mr. Letelier went into exile and became an active opponent of the Chilean regime of President Augusto Pinochet.

The evidence obtained here is considered particularly important because it involves a direct linkage of General Contreras to the case, independent of what Mr. Townley has said.