

Chilean Leader Discusses Extradition in Letelier Case

By JUAN de ONIS

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SANTIAGO, Chile, Aug. 2 — President Augusto Pinochet confirmed today that three former officers of Chile's secret police were being held under military arrest here for possible extradition to the United States for trial in the murder of Orlando Letelier.

"But this is a judicial problem, and I want it remembered that for the extradition of a person there must be proof," General Pinochet said at a breakfast meeting with reporters. "So far, there are only presumptions."

The three men ordered detained by the Chilean Government, at the request of the United States Embassy, are Gen. Manuel Contreras Sepúlveda, former head of the National Directorate of Intelligence, or DINA, and two subordinate officers who were indicted in Washington yesterday for the deaths of Mr. Letelier and Ronni Moffitt, his administrative aide, on a Washington street in September 1976.

Extradition Requests Expected Soon

Newspapers here all gave prominent display to articles about the indictments, but they came as no surprise since reports of the involvement of the Chilean intelligence officials in planning the killing of Mr. Letelier had previously been published.

A United States Embassy spokesman said that extradition requests for General Contreras, Lieut. Col. Pedro Espinoza

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Associated Press

Three of the seven men indicted in the Letelier case are, from left, José Dionisio Suárez Esquivel, Virgilio Paz Romero and Ignacio Novo Sampol.

Bravo, and Capt. Armando Fernández Larios were expected in "a couple of weeks."

At this morning's meeting, General Pinochet appeared confident about the domestic political implications of the indictments, which some have said would bring down his Government.

"No way," General Pinochet said. "Some politicians are trying to inflate this for its internal effect, and they are passing out such information to their friends abroad. If they keep on trying to cause political difficulties, they are going to catch a fever."

A reporter said that the State Department had described the situation arising from the indictments as serious.

"The State Department is finding everything serious," the President replied, "but I say that this is a problem for the judiciary. What I find serious is that they are interfering in matters which they should stay out of. They want to agitate the internal situation and for that reason we must remain calm, cool-headed and assess objectively what is happening."

General Pinochet indicated that he was prepared to carry out extradition if the proof submitted to the Chilean Supreme Court was adequate. A treaty of 1902 with the United States provides for extradition, if the high court finds that a request is supported by evidence that would be sufficient for conviction in a Chilean criminal proceeding.

The Chilean high court has maintained formal independence since General Pinochet's junta took power in September 1973, but has avoided conflicts with the executive by refusing to consider cases involving security charges. This would be the first extradition proceeding brought before the court in a politically sensitive case under this regime.

The opinion of the Chilean legal community is divided as to how independent the court will actually be in this case.

General Contreras is in custody at his home in the La Reina district of Santiago. Colonel Espinoza is confined at the infantry regiment which he commands at Punta Arenas in southern Chile, and Captain Fernández is being held at the military hospital here.