

Sentencing of Townley Is Delayed

The sentencing of Michael V. Townley, the confessed assassin of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier, was delayed yesterday while the FBI investigates the authenticity of a tape of a telephone conversation in which Townley allegedly suggested that friends threaten the judge in the case.

U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker turned over the tape to U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert saying, "This matter is of grave concern." The judge asked that the tape's authenticity be investigated as well as Townley's use of prosecutors' phones to make personal calls to Chile.

Townley told Parker in court last month that he made a Jan. 30 call to a friend in Chile from the office of Assistant U.S. Attorney Eugene M. Propper, but the judge did not ask him about the nature of the call.

As part of a plea bargain agreement with the government, Townley has been promised that he will receive a 3 1/3-to-10-year sentence for his role in the Letelier killing. Parker said that he will defer formal sentencing, which had been scheduled for next Monday, until the issue of the tape is determined.