

Cubans' Convictions Pressure Chile on DINA

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The conviction here of three Cuban exiles on charges related to the assassination of Orlando Letelier increases pressure on the Chilean government to deal with the three DINA secret police officers who the United States contends are involved in the crime, officials say.

"Now the whole world knows that the conspiracy to kill Letelier, which started in Chile and was carried out on the streets of Washington, has resulted in a verdict of guilty for the Cubans who were involved," one official said.

"Chile must now either extradite the indicted DINA officials to the U.S. for trial or conduct an honest trial of the secret policemen under the laws of Chile."

But most U.S. officials involved concede there is little likelihood the government of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, president of Chile, will hand the

three Chilean army officers over to the United States for trial.

THEY ARE HOPING Chile will try to convict Gen. Manuel Contreras, Col. Pedro Espinoza and Capt. Armando Fernandez, who the United States claims had roles in the Letelier assassination.

The verdict came yesterday afternoon on the 26th day of the trial into the murder of the former Chilean ambassador and his colleague, Ronni K. Moffit, who were killed Sept. 21, 1976, when a remote-control bomb ripped through Letelier's car as they were driving near Sheridan Circle.

The jury sent word to U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker that it had reached a decision after 8½ hours of deliberations. The defendants — Guillermo Novo Sampol, Alvin Ross Diaz and Ignacio Novo Sampol — took their seats as the jury of seven women and five men filed into the room. Twenty U.S. Marshals took up stations between the well of the court

and the spectators, who included a dozen Cuban women of the Novo and Ross families.

WHEN THE jury foreman said "guilty" to the first of the seven charges against Guillermo Novo, the Cuban women gasped and began to weep uncontrollably. They embraced one another and cried loudly as the foreman repeatedly said "guilty" to the charges of conspiracy to murder a foreign official, murder of a foreign official, first-degree murder of both Letelier and Moffitt, murder by use of explosives and two counts of false declarations.

The jury foreman continued the litany of "guilty" to every charge against the anti-Castro Cuban defendants.

Guillermo Novo, leader of the New Jersey branch of the Cuban Nationalist Movement, remained impassive as his fate was recited by the jury foreman.

Ross, a Bay of Pigs veteran, wore a

faint smile as the foreman repeated the word "guilty" five times to similar murder and conspiracy charges against him.

IGNACIO NOVO Sampol gestured reassuringly to the sobbing women through the screen of marshals and blew a kiss to his wife, Silvia, when his turn came.

The jury found Ignacio Novo guilty on two counts of perjury and one indictment charging that he failed to report a felony.

Ignacio Novo, who had made a gesture as if throwing dice when the jury began deliberating Tuesday afternoon, looked at reporters and said, "The dice came up craps."

After Parker polled each juror to affirm that the tally was unanimous, the panel, which has been sequestered in a hotel since early January, left the courtroom. For security reasons, the names of the jurors have not been made public.

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In a last gesture leaving the courtroom, Ignacio cried out "Cuba!" and Ross raised both hands and defiantly shouted "Viva Cuba!" as the marshals took them away.

GUILLERMO NOVO and Ross face sentences of from 20 years to life imprisonment although they could be eligible for release in 13 years. Ignacio Novo could be sentenced to up to 13 years.

Parker said he would set a date for sentencing later and gave defense attorneys Paul Goldberger, Lawrence Dubin and Oscar Gonzalez Suarez until March 5 to file post-trial motions.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Eugene M. Propper, E. Lawrence Barcella and Dianne Kelly were given until March 12 to reply to the motions.

The defense attorneys said they would appeal the convictions as soon as Parker has sentenced the three men. Parker also revoked the \$25,000 bail under which Ignacio Novo has been free.

Isabel Letelier, widow of the slain leftist, came to the courtroom with colleagues from the Institute of Policy Studies, where Moffit and Letelier had worked. But she arrived too late to hear the verdict.

The prosecution's star witness, Michael V. Townley, the 36-year-old American expatriate who joined DINA as an electronics and explosives expert and who testified for the government for five days during the trial, was not in the courthouse when the verdict came in.

TOWNLEY, WHO IS in custody at an undisclosed place outside Washington, was sentenced earlier to from three years and four months to 10 years on a single conspiracy charge for his role in placing the bomb that killed Letelier. He can expect parole in 30 months. His wife and two children are under the witness protection act and live under guard of U.S. marshals.

Townley's testimony that he was ordered by his DINA superiors to recruit the Cubans to kill Letelier made the connection between the Chilean DINA and the Cuban exile activists.

The FBI had to expose in court several informers whose testimony was key to the guilty verdicts. These witnesses are under government protection and will be provided with new identities.

Townley's movements were traced through his meetings with the Cuban Nationalist Movement in New York and New Jersey after he arrived in the United States with bomb components.

The testimony was that the CNM members consented to assassinate Letelier but only on condition that Townley go on the mission, too. Townley said he and Virgilio Paz, a fugitive in the case, made the bomb in a Washington motel and that he attached it under Letelier's car on Sept. 18, 1976, while the Cubans stood watch.

Townley said he then went to Miami where he heard about the explosion four days later from Ignacio Novo. The government said Paz was back in New Jersey, and that Townley concluded Jose Dioniso Suarez, another fugitive, triggered the bomb by a remote-control radio device.

Other witnesses testified that Guillermo Novo and Ross acknowledged in the New York Metropolitan Correction Center that they had done the assassination.



Aivin Ross Diaz (left), Ignacio Novo and Guillermo Novo (right) were convicted yesterday in the 1976 slaying of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier.