

Man Acquitted of Killing Letelier Given 18 Months for Perjury

By Scot Paltrow
and Michael Vitez

Washington Star Staff Writers

A Cuban exile who was convicted of murdering former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier and then acquitted in a retrial was sentenced yesterday to 18 months in prison for lying to a grand jury probing the envoy's death.

U.S. District Court Judge Barrington D. Parker sentenced Guillermo Novo Sampol to 4½ years in prison, but gave him credit for three years he already has served in connection with the case.

Novo Sampol, 41, and Alvin Ross Diaz, 48, were convicted in 1978 of the murder and sentenced to life in prison. But both were acquitted in a retrial last month.

During the retrial, however, Novo Sampol was charged with two counts of perjury. Prosecutors claim he allegedly gave false statements to a grand jury and yesterday's sentence stems from his conviction on those charges.

Letelier and an aide, Ronni Karpen Moffitt, were killed Sept. 21,

1976, when a remote control bomb exploded in Letelier's car as it entered Sheridan Circle. The assassination was probably the most flagrant act of international terrorism carried out in Washington.

When he sentenced Ross and Diaz in 1978, Parker had said, "In the 10 years I have served on the bench, I've never presided over a trial of a murder as monstrous as this."

Last year, however, the U.S. Court of Appeals here overturned the guilty verdicts and ordered a new trial, ruling that Parker, who presided over both the original trial and the retrial, should not have allowed fellow jail inmates to testify against the two men.

Novo Sampol could have been sentenced to a maximum of 10 years on the perjury counts.

In both trials prosecutors asserted that the murder was instigated by DINA, the Chilean secret police, to silence Letelier, a potent critic of the regime of Chilean President Augusto Pinochet. Letelier, a former ambassador to the United States, was living in exile in Washington.

The Washington Star 6-27-81 A2