

Union City cops can't protect Cuban '75'

By KAREN YAREMKO

Members of the Committee of 75, who negotiated with Cuban Premier Fidel Castro for release of political prisoners, are not safe in Union City, police admitted yesterday when talking about the assassination of Eulalio Jose Negrin.

Negrin, 38, a committee member who was bitterly criticized by many of his fellow Cuban exiles in the area, was machine-gunned to death Sunday morning by two masked men in a passing car on 10th Street. Negrin's 12-year-old son, Richard, watched the murder from inside his father's car.

Union City Police Chief Herman Bolte yesterday said, "I just don't think any Committee of 75 member would be safe walking the streets of Union City at night. The feelings of the Cuban people here just run too deep concerning Castro."

Bolte pointed out that many local Cubans had relatives or friends who were imprisoned or killed in Cuba.

As far as police know, Negrin was the last committee member to remain in Union City. In May, another committee member, the Rev. Andres Reyes, was transferred from Holy Family Roman Catholic Church to a Newark parish. Archdiocesan spokesmen refused to discuss the transfer at the time.

For the first time yesterday, Bolte admitted police recommended the priest's transfer because of the problems in keeping order as a result of anti-Castro fervor among local residents, including some Holy Family parishioners.

Reyes, who has been keeping a low profile since the assassination, could not be reached for comment yesterday. Reyes, who along with

Negrin had received death threats in the past, declined to discuss his personal feelings after news of the murder reached him Sunday. He would only say the whole community was disturbed by the knowledge that the killers could be in their midst.

An FBI spokesman in Miami said most of the committee members live in Florida now and several have hired their own bodyguards. "But those who thought they could be targets were already frightened (before the Negrin assassination)," he said.

The Miami FBI is cooperating with the local police and FBI on the investigation, although they say they have no indication the killers came from Florida. The spokesman said he did not know of any death threats made to those in Florida since the Negrin killing.

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'75' in danger

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Bolte said there were no new developments in the investigation yesterday. He said police suspect that Omega 7, an anti-Castro terrorist group, may not have been responsible for the murder as an anonymous male caller told The Associated Press Sunday night.

Bolte said police had no plans to protect those who would come to Negrin's funeral, the details of which are being kept secret by the family. He explained police were convinced the killers were only after Negrin and not any other members of his family. Later yesterday, sources said Negrin was already buried.

When asked why Negrin was carrying such a large amount of cash—\$7,400—when he was murdered, Bolte said he believed Negrin had "accumulated" the money on behalf of the Committee of 75 "to help people in Cuba."

Negrin reportedly arranged for many people to leave Cuba for the United States. Bolte said Negrin had the money in a briefcase when he was shot.