

Trial of accused bomber opens in Manhattan court

NEW YORK (UPI) — The murder-conspiracy trial of the reputed leader of the anti-Castro terrorist group Omega 7 got underway yesterday with the selection of jurors who will decide if he plotted the death of a Cuban diplomat.

Omega 7, considered one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in the country, is a tightly-knit group of Cuban nationals committed to the overthrow of Fidel Castro. It is supported by some Union City factions.

Eduardo Arocena, 41, a

former New Jersey longshoreman, is charged with masterminding the murder of one Cuban diplomat and the attempted car-bomb murder of Cuba's United Nations ambassador in New York City, as well as a string of bombings in metropolitan New York and Miami.

The jury will be selected from a pool of 150 people at U.S. District Court in Manhattan. The trial is expected to last eight weeks.

The Cuban-born Arocena faces a maximum penalty of life

plus 70 years if convicted on all 26 counts. FBI agents testified last year that Arocena confessed he is the infamous "Omar" — the commander-in-chief and founder of Omega 7. Arocena, however, has denied making any confession.

Omega 7 has claimed responsibility for two killings and more than 30 bombings in New York City and Miami. FBI deputy director Ken Walton contends the group is one of the most active terrorist organizations in the country.

While authorities describe Arocena as a self-taught explosives expert who plots assassinations, his friends describe him as an honest family man who loves classical music.

A group of his supporters in Union City has held fundraisers to try to meet his \$750,000 bail. Arocena has been held in a federal prison in Otisville, N.Y., since his arrest on explosives charges in Miami's "Little Havana" in July, 1983.

In the indictment, Arocena is charged with the assassination of Cuban UN Attache Felix Garcia in Queens in September, 1980, a federal crime.

Arocena also is charged with attempted murder for the aborted car-bombing of Cuban UN Ambassador Raul Roa in Manhattan in March, 1980, and the bungled "contract" killings of two other men.