

F.B.I. Says Cuban Aide's Murder May Mark Shift by Terror Group

By SELWYN RAAB

The ambush slaying Thursday of an aide at the Cuban mission to the United Nations might signal a change in tactics of the anti-Castro terrorist group Omega 7 from bombing buildings to murdering individuals, an F.B.I. official said yesterday.

"We had indications some months ago," said the official, Kenneth B. Walton, the deputy assistant director of the F.B.I.'s New York office, "that the bombings may stop and other activities may accelerate. The other activities were to start killing people."

Mr. Walton's comments, made at a news conference at F.B.I. headquarters here, came as Federal and city investigators said they had failed to find "a strong lead" or a witness to the assassination of the Cuban aide, who was gunned down as he drove his car early Thursday evening along a busy street in Queens. Callers to news organizations claimed responsibility for the slaying on behalf of Omega 7 and investigators believe the terror group is definitely responsible.

Cuba demanded that the United States provide better protection for its diplomats. And Donald F. McHenry, the United States delegate to the United Na-



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Kenneth B. Walton, of F.B.I.'s New York office, at news conference.

tions, called the murder "a stain on the United States."

Mayor Koch met yesterday with the head of the Cuban mission to the U.N., Raul Roa-Kouri, to express his "outrage" at the slaying of the Cuban aide, Felix

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Garcia-Rodriguez, who was 41 years old. Mr. Koch promised increased police protection for the Cuban delegation.

The city and the Federal Government also offered rewards totaling \$35,000 for information leading to the conviction of the killer or killers. In statements sent to news organizations, Omega 7 has described itself as an anti-Communist organization that wants to overthrow the Government of President of Fidel Castro.

Despite assurances from city officials of stonger security for the Cuban diplomatic corps, Radio Havana said that the United States had taken inadequate measures to stop Omega 7. Tass, the official Soviet press agency, said that the murder had occurred with "the full connivance" of United States authorities.

Although Mr. Garcia was officially listed by the Cuban Government as an attaché, fellow employees, who asked not to be identified, said his duties were mainly those of a chauffeur and a messenger.

Although diplomats at the United Nations suspect that many members of the Cuban mission are engaged in intelligence activities, Mr. Walton and James T. Sullivan, chief of New York City detectives, said yesterday that they had no information that Mr. Garcia had played any such role. They also denied a published report that Mr. Garcia might have been linked to illegal trade in drugs.

Asked at a news conference whether Mr. Garcia was an intelligence officer, Chief Sullivan replied: "We don't have any information that he was in intelligence. Our understanding is that he did some chauffeuring work and was often sent to airports to pick up people."

Chief Sullivan said investigators had

located four "ear witnesses" but no eye witnesses to the slaying of Mr. Garcia as he drove alone in a station wagon on the 10-lane Queens Boulevard at 58th Street in Woodside about 6:25 P.M. on Thursday.

'No Strong Leads'

"At this point, we have no strong leads," Chief Sullivan said at the joint news conference with Mr. Walton. "It was warm, it was early evening and we believe there may have been people out who saw the shooting."

Mr. Walton said: "This investigation is not a matter of following footprints in the snow. We need the cooperation of witnesses and hard intelligence work."

Mr. Garcia was struck in the left temple and the left side of his neck, Dr. Elliot M. Gross, the City's chief medical examiner, said last night after completing an autopsy. The victim was not shot at close range, Dr. Gross added.

Mr. Garcia died almost instantly, his car careering off the roadway and colliding with another vehicle that was leaving a gasoline station.

Chief Sullivan and Mr. Walton said they were convinced Omega 7 arranged the killing, mainly because the group claimed responsibility for the murder by calling news organizations before the death of Mr. Garcia was reported on radio and television.

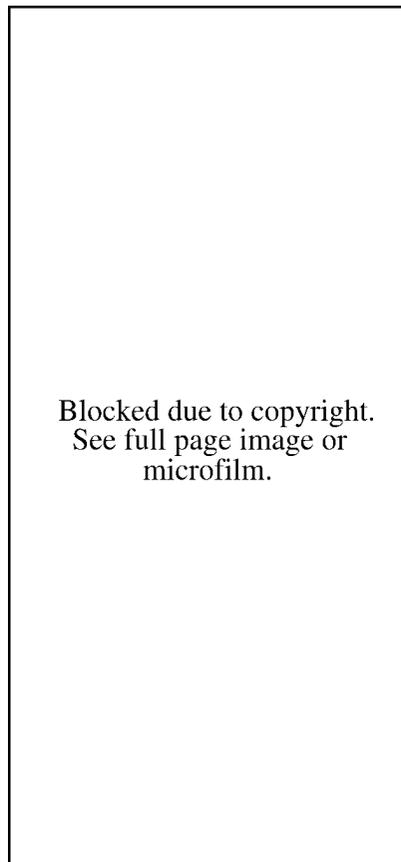
Co-Worker Describes Victim

According to employees at the Cuban mission at Lexington Avenue and 38th Street, Mr. Garcia was divorced and childless. "He was an outgoing fellow, the life of the mission," an employee said.

Almost all of the Cuban employees at the mission — there are now 39 — are listed as attachés even though they may not perform diplomatic functions, according to employees at the United Nations. The diplomatic status provides immunity from arrest.

Chief Sullivan said that Cuban officials were co-operating with detectives and F.B.I. agents and that investigators had been able to trace Mr. Garcia's whereabouts until about 3:30 P.M., Thursday, three hours before he was ambushed.

Detectives, Chief Sullivan said, learned that in the afternoon he had been in a gasoline station and another business in the Woodside area. Mr. Garcia, detec-



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The New York Times

Donald F. McHenry, chief U.S. delegate to the United Nations, watched the demonstration outside the Secretariat Building.

tives believe, was returning to the Cuban mission for dinner when he was ambushed.

The police said they had been told by Cuban representatives that Mr. Garcia often drove diplomats and employees through Queens going to and from John F. Kennedy and LaGuardia Airports. Mr. Walton said it was uncertain if Mr. Garcia had been stalked or was "a victim of opportunity."

Although detectives said they were unable to trace Mr. Garcia's movements after 3:30 P.M., an employee at the Cuban mission said he saw Mr. Garcia

there about 5 P.M. The employee, who asked for anonymity, said Mr. Garcia told him he was going to visit a friend in Queens for dinner.

The police said that the rear plate of Mr. Garcia's car was bent on both ends — in a U shape — leading detectives to believe that the car, which had diplomat plates, had been marked in this way so that the killer could identify it.

Chief Sullivan said the killers were either in a parked or moving car next to Mr. Garcia's maroon 1979 Pontiac station wagon.

Miguel Alvarez, the second secretary at the mission, said mission members were "angry and at the same time very, very sad."

He was very close to the children," Mr. Alvarez said of Mr. Garcia. "He used to wait for them to give them gum or cookies. We are not scared by what has happened. This has been part of our normal life here in the last couple of years, receiving threats, bombs that blow up. If we worried it would be very difficult to perform our duties."

The Investigative Force

Since February 1975, Omega 7 has taken responsibility for 20 bombings in New York City and in New Jersey, including five at the Cuban mission to the United Nations. Omega 7 is also believed to have been behind the murder in Union City, N.J., of Eulalio José Negrin, a Cuban exile who was organizing trips to Cuba.

Chief Sullivan and Mr. Walton emphasized that for the last four months, 22 F.B.I. agents and city detectives had been working full time in a joint task force in an attempt to track down Omega 7 members. They said at least 20 other agents and detectives had been assigned to the Garcia murder case.

F.B.I. officials said Omega 7 might have as few as seven members, although the organization's actual size is unknown. The F.B.I. also is uncertain what the name, Omega 7, signifies.

Mr. Walton said it was doubtful that any of the recent refugees who fled Cuba had been recruited by the secretive Omega 7.