

4-25-2003

# Chile: Former Head Of Secret Police Sentenced Again For Human Rights Abuses

Patricia Hynds

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

---

## Recommended Citation

Hynds, Patricia. "Chile: Former Head Of Secret Police Sentenced Again For Human Rights Abuses." (2003).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/13139>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **Chile: Former Head Of Secret Police Sentenced Again For Human Rights Abuses**

*by Patricia Hynds*

*Category/Department: General*

*Published: Friday, April 25, 2003*

Former Gen. Juan Manuel Contreras Sepulveda, head of the notorious Chilean secret police during the military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), no longer enjoys the impunity long accorded those guilty of human rights abuses in Chile. Following his latest conviction, Contreras was sentenced to 15 years in prison in connection with the disappearance of a political prisoner. Judge Alejandro Solis condemned Contreras, the former chief of the Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), to 15 years and one day in prison for the crime of qualified kidnapping in the case of Miguel Angel Sandoval Rodriguez, a member of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR). Sandoval was detained and disappeared from the infamous Villa Grimaldi detention and torture center in 1975. Although presumed dead, Sandoval's remains have never been found, so he is officially still considered kidnapped. In the judgment, Contreras was also ordered to pay approximately US\$100,000 to Sandoval's family for the pain and suffering they experienced. Sentenced along with Contreras were four of his subordinates in the DINA. Also charged as authors of the crime were former Brig. Gen. Miguel Krashnoff Marchenko, sentenced to 10 years, and former army Col. Marcelo Moren Brito, sentenced to 15 years. Former Brig. Gen. Fernando Lauriani Maturana and former Carabinero Col. Geraldo Godoy Garcia were charged as accomplices and each sentenced to five years in prison. All defendants said they would appeal. More than 3,000 people were killed or disappeared during that period. The DINA was accused of the most serious human rights violations, including widespread torture, executions, and forced disappearances. Contreras could return to special prison. It was Contreras' second conviction for human rights crimes. In 2001, he completed a seven-year term for his role in the 1976 car-bomb assassination in Washington, DC, of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier and his US assistant Ronni Moffitt (see NotiSur, 1995-06-02). In addition, Contreras has been indicted for his role in the murder of former Chilean Gen. Carlos Prats and his wife Sofia Cuthbert, who were killed in a car-bomb explosion in Buenos Aires in 1974 (see NotiSur, 2003-03-07). After Contreras was sentenced in 1995 in the Washington car bombing, he completed his sentence in the special Punta de Peuco residential prison (See NotiSur, 1995-10-27). The prison was constructed for high-ranking military prisoners, and the "residents" enjoyed comforts such as private bathrooms and personal color televisions. Contreras could soon be back at Punta de Peuco. On March 28, the Santiago Appeals Court rejected Contreras' request for conditional liberty, calling the general "a danger to society." The same court upheld the indictment of Contreras on the charges relating to the assassination of Gen. Prat and his wife. Human rights advocates praise sentence. Families of the victims of the dictatorship expressed satisfaction upon hearing that Contreras had been given a 15- year sentence. "We are satisfied and pleased. That justice was done at least partially compensates for the immense harm that was caused," said Viviana Diaz, secretary general of the Agrupacion de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD). "Nothing will ever bring our relatives back to life," but verdicts such as his help bring us hope. Diaz said Miguel Angel Sandoval was on the list of 119 Chileans supposedly killed in other countries that appeared in the Argentine magazine *Lea* and in the Brazilian newspaper *O Dia de Curitiba* in July 1975. Later investigations showed that the reports were fabricated by the DINA with the

collaboration of the security forces in Brazil and Argentina to cover up the disappearances of opponents to the Pinochet regime. The coverup was part of Operation Condor, the coordinated effort of the military dictatorships in the Southern Cone in the 1970s (see NotiSur, 2001-06-01). The case also was the first in Chile that recognized people who were detained-disappeared as victims of crime. "This condemnation of Contreras and the other former DINA agents is very important because it sets a precedent," said Diaz. In a related matter, on April 16, the Santiago Appeals Court upheld Judge Solis' order that retired Gen. Hector Bravo stand trial on charges of responsibility in the 1973 massacre of 17 campesinos in Valdivia, 900 km south of Santiago. The bodies were exhumed at the end of 1978, according to the Rettig Report, which documented human rights violations during the dictatorship. [Sources: Associated Press, Notimex, The Santiago Times (Chile), 04/15/03; Spanish news service EFE, 03/28/03; 04/15/03, 04/16/03]

-- End --