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## Judge Weighs Extradition of Former DINA Agent

by LADB Staff

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Chileans are caught up watching a kind of soap opera in which lower-ranking military involved in human rights abuses during the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) are revealing information about crimes committed during that time and asking forgiveness. Several important indictments have recently been handed down, and a former secret police agent is being held under house arrest while a judge considers an extradition request for her to Argentina.

These events underscore the tensions between the former officers involved in past human rights violations and the current commanders who want to clear the record, said Hector Salazar, an attorney for victims of the dictatorship, to Inter Press Service.

Writer Mariana Callejas, a former member of Pinochet's feared secret police (Direccion Nacional de Inteligencia, DINA) was placed under house arrest on July 17 in relation to the September 1974 Buenos Aires car-bomb killing of Chilean Gen. Carlos Prats and his wife Sofia Cuthbert (see NotiSur, 2003-03-07). Callejas was questioned for three hours by Corte Suprema Judge Nibaldo Segura following receipt a week earlier of an extradition request from Judge Maria Servini de Cubria, the Argentine judge in charge of the Prats case.

Following the questioning, Callejas was returned to her residence where she is being kept under guard. Callejas' ex-husband, Michael Townley, also a former member of the now disbanded DINA, was a key witness in the case and has admitted planting the bomb. However, he is under the US witness-protection program as part of a deal he made for naming his co-conspirators in the car-bombing assassination of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier and his US aide Ronni Moffitt in Washington, DC, in September 1976.

Judge Segura will now consider whether to grant extradition for Callejas. Sources for the Chilean daily La Nacion suggested that the request may well be rejected but that the judge could order Callejas tried in Chile. Judge Segura will also decide on an extradition request from Judge Servini for former Army Brig. Christopher Willike, wanted in the same case.

Another DINA agent, Enrique Arancibia, is the only person convicted to date in the Buenos Aires assassination (see NotiSur 2000-12-01). He is serving a life sentence in Argentina.

### *Other cases capture Chileans attention*

On Sept. 21, Chilean Judge Juan Guzman indicted five retired army officers for a series of political killings in 1973 that became known as the Caravan of Death. Judge Guzman accused the five, including two army generals, of murdering 20 political prisoners in southern Chile, shortly after the Sept. 11, 1973, coup that toppled President Salvador Allende (1970-1973).

Judge Guzman has said the Caravan of Death killed at least 95 people altogether. Guzman indicted Pinochet in 2001 on charges relating to the Caravan of Death assassinations, but the case against the former dictator was dismissed last year on health grounds (see NotiSur, 2001-07-12).

Among those indicted last week by Judge Guzman were Gen. Sergio Arellano, commander of the squad that allegedly organized the killings. The five former officers were indicted for assassinations in three southern cities. Two of them had previously been charged by the same judge with 75 similar killings in northern Chile, it said.

The state-owned Television Nacional on July 7 broadcast statements by Juan Carlos Molina, a former army helicopter mechanic, who said he participated in the late 1970s in throwing the bodies of nine political prisoners eight men and a woman into the Pacific ocean. He said the bodies were "wrapped and tied to lengths of train rails so they would sink," and he added that the prisoners had been killed with anaesthesia so "gave off an unbearable smell of chloroform."

The Chilean daily El Mercurio published on June 29 an extensive interview with Eliseo Cornejo, a retired noncommissioned army officer, who said he had witnessed the shootings of 21 people in La Moneda presidential palace during the 1973 coup. Cornejo said he participated in illegally burying the bodies of prisoners shot at Peldehue, a military base north of Santiago. He said that, five years later, in December 1978, under orders of his superiors, he helped locate the bodies, which were dug up and moved to prevent discovery. He said he decided to go public with this information after a judge charged him and other retired military with the crime of illegal exhumation.

His revelations prompted eight retired lieutenant generals who served as vice commanders of the army during the dictatorship to issue a statement on July 3 in which they expressed regret for the anguish caused by the human rights abuses during the dictatorship.

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