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Former Intell Director Provides List of Political Murders

by LADB Staff
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The head of the national Chilean intelligence service under former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), retired Gen. Manuel Contreras, has released a report on individuals who were disappeared or murdered during his tenure. Family members of disappeared citizens welcomed the report, saying it showed that there was documentation available on their relatives, but they also criticized Contreras for accounting for only a fraction of the dead and disappeared during the dictatorship.

The former head of the Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), who returned to prison in January, called on Pinochet to offer a similar accounting and an apology to the Chilean people.

Contreras: List of 580 dead in response to Rettig report

On May 13, Contreras handed over a 33-page report detailing the fate of almost 600 victims of forced disappearance. The former head of the secret police also accused Pinochet of maintaining an "ominous silence" rather than standing up for his subordinates when they were accused of human rights violations. The government of President Ricardo Lagos as well as activists with the Agrupacion de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD), a group of relatives of disappeared, reacted cautiously to the release of report.

Contreras, who headed the DINA from 1974 until 1978, when it was renamed the Centro Nacional de Informaciones (CNI), is serving his second prison sentence. He handed the report in to the Corte Suprema de Justicia (CSJ), the Consejo de Defensa del Estado (CDE), and the Ministry of Justice, through his lawyer. The information provided by Contreras includes the names of 580 victims of forced disappearance (desaparecidos), the state body that picked them up, the date on which they were detained, where they were originally taken, and how they were killed (most of them were shot to death).

The former DINA chief claims, however, that in several cases reports produced by special commissions were mistaken because, according to the information in his possession, many of the disappeared who have been classified as victims of summary execution were actually killed in armed clashes with the security forces.

In the document, Contreras says that since the Rettig Report, released by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1991 (see NotiSur, 2001-01-12, Chronicle, 1990-04-26), "situations that translated into alleged violations of the human rights of terrorists and other people who espoused violence" systematically began to be blamed solely on the DINA. "That would seem to be an unjust and intolerably disproportionate level of blame, added to the constant ominous silence of my superior, the president of the republic and commander in chief of the Army at that time [Pinochet]," he writes.
Contreras once again emphasized that the DINA "directly answered to" the former dictator, who is under investigation by the courts for human rights crimes committed in the framework of Operation Condor, a coordinated plan among the military governments that ruled in the region in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Rettig Report found that 3,000 Chileans were "disappeared" or murdered by the security forces during the regime. Beyond that, a report compiled last year by a special commission documented the torture suffered by more than 27,000 former political prisoners (see NotiSur, 2004-11-19). Contreras says that only 80 of the 580 forced disappearances listed in his report were the work of DINA, while much larger numbers were the responsibility of the Army and the militarized police (Carabineros). He also attributed a smaller number of cases to the police and special units created to crack down on "subversion."

In addition, 23 of the 580 were allegedly killed outside of Chile. Contreras' dossier says that 590 "detained disappeared" persons fell at the hands of the following divisions of the military government.

The list includes the DINA, the Central Nacional de Inteligencia (CNI), and the joint command (Comando Conjunto), among other security forces. Army: 134 Navy: 35 Air Force: 53 Carabineros (militarized police): 92 DINA: 80 Policía de Investigaciones: 35 CNI: 10 Comando Conjunto: 94 Dept. II Estado Mayor de Defensa Nacional: 6 Fuerzas Armadas y de Orden: 18 Arrested and released: 6 Seen in Chile: 4 Killed abroad: 23 Contreras claimed that six "supposed disappeared" were actually arrested and released, while four others have been "sighted in Chile."

One of the report's most controversial claims refers to journalist Diana Aron, who was tortured to death in Villa Grimaldi, DINA's main clandestine detention and torture camp, according to the Rettig Report. The document handed over by Contreras, however, states that Aron, a member of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), died in an armed confrontation with government forces and was buried in a common grave after her body was taken to the forensic medicine institute.

The president of the AFDD, Lorena Pizarro, said that, judging from a "preliminary reading" of Contreras' report, it contains the same information that was produced by a "dialogue panel" that met in 1999 and 2000. The panel, composed of representatives of the armed forces, human rights lawyers, academics, and religious leaders, compiled reports provided by the military and police on the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared. But some details about victims whose bodies were reportedly thrown into the sea were later proven to be wrong, when their remains were found on land. "

The only true aspects of the document would seem to be the date of detention of the victims and the names of the state bodies that seized them. But the information on the whereabouts of the disappeared is not apparently correct," Pizarro said.

The human rights activist said that the former DINA chief "has no authority to attempt to exonerate his subordinates" and that all of those guilty of human rights abuses should be punished. She also
said that Contreras is trying to "whitewash his image" and receive more lenient treatment in the courts in the more than 100 cases against him.

By contrast, AFDD vice president Mireya Garcia, who was also able to glance through but not read the document thoroughly, described it as "hard hitting." She said, "It confirms what we have said for so many years: that those who violated human rights and were at the head of the security bodies that engaged in the repression indeed have all of the information" on the disappeared.

**Contreras sentenced and imprisoned in January**

In November 2004, Contreras began a 12-year prison sentence for masterminding the kidnapping and murder of a leftist political figure. He had previously served another seven-year sentence from 1995-2002 for the 1976 car-bomb assassination in Washington, DC, of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier and his US assistant Ronni Moffitt (see NotiSur, 1993-06-02).

In 2003, a judge found Contreras and a number of his ex-subordinates guilty of the 1975 kidnapping and murder of Miguel Angel Sandoval of the MIR (see NotiSur, 2003-04-25). Contreras' lawyers appealed the verdict but failed to reverse the decision. In January, the ex-officer would not surrender to authorities, and Chilean police had to remove Contreras from his home.

An angry crowd jeered Contreras as he entered police facilities under heavy police protection, and he was pelted with eggs and stones and spit at by dozens of human rights activists and relatives of his victims. Some current and former army officers complained about the security conditions at Contreras' court appearance in January.

In April, a Santiago court approved the guilty finding against four ex-DINA members accused of killing MIR party member Luis Dagoberto San Martin. Contreras was one of those four, along with his former underlings, retired Brig. Gen. Raul Iturriaga Neumann, who received a 10-year sentence, and Miguel Krassnoff and Gerardo Urrich, who each received three-year sentences.

**Contreras blames Pinochet for not revealing more**

Contreras says he would have liked to hear from Pinochet what current Army chief Juan Emilio Cheyre said to the country last year. The head of the Army offered an apology to victims of the Pinochet regime, taking responsibility for the Army's role in human rights offenses (see NotiSur, 2004-11-19). Other branches of the Chilean security forces later followed with apologies of their own, though none were as sweeping as Cheyre's. The apology came as President Lagos released a massive report that compiled testimony from victims of torture at the regime's hands. "I would have liked it if Gen. Pinochet had said the same thing as Gen. Cheyre, in the same sense," said Contreras.

Human rights advocates say that many of the torturers of the old regime remain free and that figures like Contreras seek to protect them. In November Contreras denied that there was ever a "policy of torture" at the DINA or that people were detained for assassination. "That was never ordered," he said. CSJ extends investigation deadline In May, Chile's CSJ indefinitely suspended a
deadline it set earlier this year for ending investigations into alleged human rights abuses. The new ruling means judges will be given extra time to investigate and charge suspects in more than 150 cases, some of which involve Gen. Pinochet.

Relatives of victims and human rights groups had been campaigning against the deadline, which was to take effect July 25. The groups called the ruling a breakthrough. Human rights lawyer Nelson Caucoto described the decision as "splendid." He said judges would now have time to thoroughly examine allegations of human rights abuses.

Last January, the CSJ ruled that investigations into alleged human rights violations had to be wrapped up within six months. The central argument had been that most of the alleged crimes had occurred more than 30 years ago and the ongoing investigations were unfair to the alleged perpetrators.

But on May 6, a CSJ spokesman announced the indefinite suspension of the deadline. The spokesman said changed circumstances had forced the new ruling. He said new judges had been assigned to human rights cases and they needed extra time to do their work.

One of the new judges is Victor Montiglio, who will take over the work of Judge Juan Guzman, who retired earlier that week after a 35-year career in the judiciary. Montiglio now has responsibility for 35 investigations, including the key case of Operation Condor. Human rights groups celebrated Judge Guzman's decisions against Pinochet earlier this year (see NotiSur, 2005-01-07).

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