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Honduras: Attorney Representing Ramon Matta Assassinated

by Deborah Tyroler

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On the evening of Jan. 23, Jose Carlos Diaz Lorenzana, defense attorney for Honduran Ramon Matta, was assassinated in a burst of machine-gun fire by unknown assailants outside his home. Authorities counted 19 bullet wounds in his body. Matta, a drug trafficker linked to the Medellin cartel, was captured by Honduran security forces in Tegucigalpa, and subsequently extradited to the US last year. Matta's extradition and imprisonment in the US triggered street protests in April, 1988, which culminated in the destruction of buildings attached to the US Embassy in the capital city. Two months later, in an act of reprisal against the Honduran military for having delivered Matta over to US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents, the Medellin cartel reportedly provided information to US authorities on the drug trafficking activities of military officer Rigoberto Regalado, brother to the Honduran military's chief of staff. Regalado was arrested in Miami, where several kilograms of cocaine were discovered in his luggage. On Jan. 24, Honduran President Jose Azcona Hoyo described the murder of Diaz Lorenzana as "inherent to the [drug-related] violence unleashed at a world level." (Basic data from Notimex, 01/24/89)

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