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Colosio Assassination Remains Unsolved After Four Years

by LADB Staff

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The special commission investigating the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio has been unable to solve the case after four years. Colosio, a member of the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), was gunned down on March 23, 1994, while campaigning in a poor neighborhood in Tijuana (see SourceMex, 03/30/94).

Speaking at a press conference on the fourth anniversary of Colosio's assassination, special prosecutor Luis Raul Gonzalez Perez said the only conclusion reached thus far is that Colosio was killed by a lone gunman, Mario Aburto. Aburto is being held at a federal penitentiary, where he is serving a 45-year sentence. Gonzalez's report is similar to one published by the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR) in July 1997, which also concluded that a single assassin killed Colosio (see SourceMex, 07/30/97).

Gonzalez, the sixth special prosecutor in the Colosio case, said investigators have taken statements from more than 1,100 individuals and compiled 47,000 pages of material, but have yet to find any evidence that others besides Aburto were directly involved in the assassination.

Investigation focuses on intellectual authors

Still, the seven-member commission continues to investigate numerous allegations that other individuals or groups planned the assassination. The most frequently mentioned theories are that the assassination was planned either by drug traffickers or by opponents of Colosio within his own party. The first theory suggests that Colosio was killed either for his secret links to drug traffickers or for openly opposing drug cartels.

The second theory suggests that Colosio's assassination was ordered by hard-line members of the PRI or by former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Salinas, in self-imposed exile in Ireland, has denied any involvement in Colosio's assassination. But opposition parties have called for the PGR to subpoena Salinas to testify on the case. Jesus Ortega, secretary general of the opposition Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), said Salinas could provide valuable information. "The former president had control of all the intelligence and security apparatus for Colosio," Ortega said.

Another version of this theory is that several PRI governors and drug traffickers conspired to assassinate Colosio. This theory was mentioned by former drug lord Oscar Lopez in an interview with Mexico City daily newspapers and the official news agency Notimex. Lopez, now a paid informant for the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), was at one time a top lieutenant in the Gulf Cartel. Gonzalez declined to comment on any of the theories. "We cannot take an irresponsible position and talk about a particular theory when we do not have any proof," Gonzalez said.

At the same time, the special prosecutor said his office was continuing to investigate anyone who might have had a motive in the assassination, including Salinas and former Mexico City mayor

Manuel Camacho Solis, who had sought the PRI presidential nomination. "We are not exonerating anyone," said Gonzalez. PRI leaders in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate also expressed concern about the lack of resolution to the Colosio murder. Sen. Mario Vargas, head of the special Senate committee on the case, said serious errors in the investigations led by all six prosecutors resulted in the loss of important clues and evidence. "Many citizens are feeling frustrated about the lack of efficiency and clarity in this investigation," Vargas said at a recent hearing on the case.

Jesus Blancornelas, editor of the independent weekly newspaper Zeta, believes the special prosecutor is paving the way for the eventual conclusion that there was no conspiracy. "The case has been so manipulated during the past four years that even if the special prosecutor proves that it was a lone gunman, no one will believe him," said Blancornelas in an interview with The Dallas Morning News.

Blancornelas, who published a book on the Colosio case in December, said the news media has been quick to offer conspiracy theories but has not presented any proof. The journalist praised Gonzalez Perez for conducting a thorough and honest investigation. "This latest special prosecutor, Gonzalez Perez, has the best investigative system of any so far," said Blancornelas.

Blancornelas is no stranger to controversy, surviving an assassination attempt in November 1997. The editor apparently angered members of the Tijuana cartel when he published an article identifying David Barron Corona as a hit man for the cartel (see SourceMex, 12/17/97). [Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 03/19/98; El Nacional, 03/20/98; Associated Press, 03/21/98; Notimex, 03/19/98, 03/23/98; The Dallas Morning News, 03/23/98 La Jornada, 03/19/98, 03/24/98; Excelsior, 03/23/98, 03/24/98; El Economista, 03/24/98; El Diario de Yucatan, 03/20/98, 03/25/98; The News, 03/20/98, 03/23/98, 03/25/98]

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