
International Terrorism

Who's running the Omega 7 threat

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On Sept. 11, Félix García Rodríguez, an employee at the Cuban Mission to the United Nations in New York City was assassinated as he drove his car on a crowded street in Queens, N.Y. Within moments of the assassination, a call was received at the Cuban Mission to the U.N. in which the caller claimed credit for the killing on behalf of the Cuban exile terrorist group, Omega 7. The caller threatened to carry out a similar assault on Cuban U.N. Ambassador Raúl Roa Khoury.

Sources have reported to *Investigative Leads* that García, the security and counterintelligence expert at the mission, had been investigating the role of Omega 7 and other exile gangs in the multibillion-dollar cocaine and marijuana traffic in southern Florida at the time of his assassination. Some of that money may now be a war chest devoted to bankrolling a new wave of rightwing terrorism throughout the Western hemisphere parallel to the recent activation of the Armed Revolutionary Nucleus (NAR) in Italy and the FANE in France.

These fears of renewed activity from the Cuban exiles have been bolstered by a series of recent developments.

On Sept. 16, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C. ruled that two members of Omega 7, Guillermo Novo Sampol and Alvin Ross Díaz, must be retried and their prior conviction overturned in the 1976 bombing assassination of former Chilean government official Orlando Letelier. The Court ruled that evidence critical to the original conviction of the pair had been illegally planted in their jail cell and therefore had to be stricken from the prosecutors' case.

The same day, a military tribunal in Venezuela entered a not guilty ruling in the trial of Dr. Orlando Bosch, the founder of Omega 7 who had been accused of masterminding the 1976 Air Cubana bombing that claimed over 72 lives.

The Omega 7 organization was created at the 1976 World Anti-Communist League (WACL) conference in Miami, Florida, attended by hundreds of Cuban anti-Castro exiles and rightwing activists from all over the Western hemisphere. The U.S. delegation to that conference was bankrolled by Reverend José Casado, a minister in the Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung

Moon. During the 1960s, Reverend Moon created a similar WACL organization spanning all of Southeast Asia. By late 1975, the U.S. Cuban exile networks had already begun to resurface as a terrorist formation with the founding of the Cuban Nationalist Movement, based out of Union City, New Jersey and Miami. It is widely believed that the CNM and Omega 7 are identical.

In late 1975, a former Chilean minister in the government of Salvador Allende was assassinated in Rome. Bernardo Leighton and his wife were gunned down by an individual later identified as a member of the Italian fascist youth party, "Comando Cero." However, credit for the murder was claimed by CNM member Virgilio Paz. Paz would be later implicated in the Washington, D.C. assassination of Orlando Letelier.

This "joint venture" assassination was later explained by Michael Townley, a go-between in both the Leighton and Letelier hits, as a prearranged public relations stunt to provide the newly constituted Cuban exile group with instant notoriety.

Perhaps the most notorious factor in the Omega 7-CNM story revolves around Townley himself. According to information released in the trial of Novo and Ross Díaz, Michael Townley had been the Chilean director of Investors Overseas Service (IOS) for a number of years preceding the 1975 founding of Omega 7-CNM. Under the guise of being an international mutual fund, IOS deployed an army of "salesmen" in over a hundred countries around the world. These salesmen were couriers of black market revenues, garnered from international narcotics traffic and related criminal operations.

In the 1960s, French President Charles de Gaulle and the French intelligence service SDECE proved that monies laundered through the IOS and the Banque de la Credit Internationale (BCI) had been passed into a Montreal-based international trade expositions firm called Permindex to finance the assassination attempt against the General. IOS-Permindex couriers had delivered \$200,000 to the rightwing Secret Army Organization (OAS) for the hit attempt on de Gaulle.

Former IOS Chile boss Townley currently lists himself as an official of the Chilean secret police agency, DINA. As one of the countries in the cocaine-producing and shipment region of Latin America, Chile is at the center of the international narcotics traffic route into southern Florida that García was investigating at the time of his assassination. This raises the possibility that drugs, rather than "political ideology," may have been the motivating factor behind the García killing. It further raises the possibility that the IOS-Permindex assassination-drug organization of the 1960s has been reconstituted—under a new series of commercial and political front organizations—and that the recent spate of terrorist operations throughout Western Europe, Latin America, and now the United States may be part of a single effort sponsored by the international drug network. ■