

Dateline Mexico by Francisco Roncalli

CIA's ties to drug runners exposed

A top CIA asset is under investigation for his role in murdering U.S. anti-drug operative Enrique Camarena.

In one of its rare truthful articles, the *New York Times* on March 25 revealed that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency maintained close ties with José Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, the former director of Mexico's Federal Security Agency (DFS) from 1982-85, who is currently imprisoned for his role in protecting that country's drug czars and for ordering the 1984 assassination of prominent journalist Manuel Buendía.

The most striking aspect of the article is that it mentioned, for the first time in any U.S. press, that Zorrilla is being investigated for his possible participation in the drug mob's assassination of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena.

According to the article by Jeff Gerth, federal officials in the United States told him that Zorrilla "was now under investigation by the Los Angeles grand jury which is investigating Mr. Camarena's kidnaping and murder." Until now, Zorrilla has never been mentioned in connection with the Camarena affair. In fact, only *EIR* has dared to suggest that Zorrilla was being protected by the CIA from exposure for his involvement, because of the numerous "dirty tricks" he has done for them in Mexico and Central America, particularly in support of the Nicaraguan Contras.

The *New York Times* confirmed *EIR*'s assertions, citing "a 1987 Drug Enforcement Administration report on the Camarena case [which] indicates that Miguel Angel Félix Gallardo, described in the indictment as a top drug trafficker and principal in the kidnaping, supported the CIA-backed

Nicaraguan Contras by smuggling arms and providing them money."

The DEA report has not, however, been released to the public, which suggests that Zorrilla, in fact, did maintain a connection to the CIA, to the international drug trade, and to the Contras. During Zorrilla's ongoing trial in Mexico City, it was confirmed that the former security chief protected Félix Gallardo's criminal activities. Félix Gallardo is considered the main partner of the Colombian cocaine cartels in Mexico, charged with cocaine distribution inside the United States.

Despite these known relations between Zorrilla and Mexico's leading drug chieftains, the CIA office in Mexico maintained a surprising collaboration with Zorrilla even as Mexican political and police circles distanced themselves. Gerth reports that former DEA director Francis Mullen encountered one of the most disagreeable surprises of his life when "he sought information on the Camarena killing" and "was angered that the local CIA station chief in Mexico City took him to see the chief of the unit, José Antonio Zorrilla, 'who might be involved in the whole thing—his guys were actually involved.'"

The reports published by the *Times* reinforce the hypothesis that Camarena was assassinated because he had discovered that both Mexican and Colombian drug traffickers were involved in support operations for the Contras that had been approved by the White House, Lt. Col. Oliver North, and the CIA.

In light of these latest revelations, it would appear appropriate to call the

former CIA station chief of Mexico City who worked with Zorrilla, to appear before the Los Angeles grand jury pursuing the Camarena investigation.

Another key element which helps to confirm this hypothesis can be found in a report submitted in December 1988 by the narcotics subcommittee of the U.S. Senate, headed by John Kerry (D-Mass.). The report contains several explosive revelations, including that Honduran drug trafficker Juan Ramón Matta Ballesteros received financing from the Office of Humanitarian Assistance of the U.S. State Department, to provide logistical support to the Contras. Matta received the money through his private airline, SETCO, headquartered in Honduras. SETCO'S employment by the U.S. government was approved by then-U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte, who conveniently ignored the fact that since at least 1983, the U.S. Customs Service considered Matta to be "a class I [drug] violator," as the *Times* itself reveals.

If the evaluations by his own customs service were not sufficient evidence, Negroponte might have bothered to scan the Mexican press during the days following the Camarena assassination, which published statements from various DEA spokesmen in Mexico and Washington describing Matta as the man believed to be behind the Camarena murder. During 1984 and 1985, Matta worked in Mexico as the liaison between Félix Gallardo's gang and that of the Colombian cocaine cartel of Pablo Escobar and Jorge Ochoa, whom he represented inside Mexico. Upon learning of the Camarena assassination, the DEA requested Matta's capture by Mexican authorities, but he managed to escape the country—the result of complicity between Mexican and U.S. officials.