

Andean Report by Carlos Wesley

Startling revelations in Venezuela

Did George Bush and Venezuelan President Pérez sanction the Cubana bombing and the Letelier murder?

Orlando García, long-standing chief of security for Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, bears responsibility for the Oct. 26, 1976 bombing of a Cubana de Aviación airliner off Barbados in which 72 people were killed, according to Osmeiro Carneiro, an inspector general of Venezuela's Military Intelligence Directorate (DIM).

In an extensive interview serialized by the Venezuelan daily *El Nacional* in mid-July, Carneiro also accused García of withholding information he received beforehand about the plot to murder exiled Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier, who was assassinated in Washington, D.C., together with his secretary, Ronnie Moffit, in September 1976.

According to Carneiro, Lázaro Rogelio Ugarte, who recently succeeded García as chief of presidential security for Pérez, was also complicit in the bombing of the Cuban airliner.

García, a naturalized American citizen who was born in Cuba, and Ugarte, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion, were double agents employed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency when the plane was bombed, said Carneiro. His charges have created a scandal in Venezuela and elsewhere in Ibero-America, but the charges have been completely blacked out by major U.S. media. "Orlando García Vásquez and Lázaro Rogelio Ugarte Bruselau, I repeat, are two soldiers of fortune. They are also members of the U.S. CIA," said Carneiro. Ugarte "is up to his

neck in international drug trafficking," he added.

"Both Rogelio Ugarte and Orlando García should be investigated and put on trial," he said. Such an investigation could implicate President George Bush, who was Director of Central Intelligence in 1976 at the time the two alleged CIA agents, Ugarte and García, were supposedly involved in blowing up the Cuban airliner. The investigation would also involve President Pérez, who was the nominal superior of the two men.

Although, according to the DIM official, García was given the information "that people tied to the Chilean government were plotting to kill Letelier . . . instead of informing the President," Carlos Andrés Pérez, García "kept the information to himself and refrained from taking steps to prevent the assassination of Letelier."

Carneiro, who claims to have worked for three years for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, said that the DEA "has conclusive proof" of Ugarte's involvement in international drug trafficking. "Why is the DEA withholding the evidence and hiding that information? Why doesn't the DEA turn over the proof that Rogelio Ugarte is a drug trafficker to the President? That they haven't done so proves that there is something shady going on in all of this," said Carneiro.

Carneiro summed up his allegations as follows: "Orlando García Vásquez, former chief of security of the President, is an intimate friend of Rogelio Ugarte. Both were the found-

ers of the CIA office in Venezuela; they both worked for the DISIP [Venezuela's political police], both are anti-Castroite, they have common interests, therefore, they should be investigated and put on trial," said Carneiro.

There is other evidence that Ugarte is, in fact, tied to drug trafficking, as charged by Carneiro. On Jan. 12, 1989, a shipping container consigned to a Miami company owned by Ugarte, Celere, Inc., was found by U.S. Customs agents to contain 572 pounds of cocaine, according to reports in the Venezuelan press.

And Ugarte is not the only one. "Drug Trafficking Penetrated the President's Circles," read the front-page headline of the July 22 *El Nuevo País*, a daily published and edited by Rafael Poleo, whose house was recently ransacked after he published allegations of corruption by high government officials. One of those charged by Poleo and Carneiro was Gen. Herminio Fuenmayor, Carneiro's former boss at the DIM. Fuenmayor allegedly had the DIM place wiretaps on the telephones of opponents of the regime. He was forced to resign a few weeks ago for his involvement in a military procurement scandal and after he admitted that he had helped to smuggle a luxury BMW into the country as a favor for a known drug trafficker.

Also facing drug charges is a former state governor. According to published reports, even two former members of Pérez's cabinet have ties to drug traffickers that could prove embarrassing to the Venezuelan socialist President, one of Bush's most loyal and staunchest collaborators in Ibero-America.

Venezuela's Congress voted on July 20 to set up a Special Congressional Commission to investigate the charges made by Carneiro.