

7 SEP 1972

Nuevo Laredo 'Specializes' in Drugs, Death

BY LAURENCE STERN

Exclusive to The Times from
the Washington Post

NUEVO LAREDO, Mex.

Oblivious to the violence, the American tourists tramp through the sun-baked early Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer main drag, Guerrero Ave., pushing their way through the bazaars heaped with tax-free liquor, cigarets, cut-rate jewelry and handcrafted shlock.

Most of them are unaware that two other specialties of this Rio Grande border town are mutilated corpses and narcotics traffic. The relationship between the two is more than a casual one.

The machine gun and the machete have taken the lives of some 85 Mexican police, customs officials, drug pushers and hapless Americans within the past year. It has created what one local journalist calls a "psychosis of terror" in Nuevo Laredo.

Day after day the newspapers have published photographs of the blood-spattered or decapitated bodies of the latest victims of the violence. One of the newspapers, *El Manana*, had its plant machine-gunned and its presses sabotaged late last year as an admonition against identifying local hoodlums.

Violence has long been endemic to the Mexico border, where men still slouch at the bar with a gun tucked under their belt.

Dope at Root

But the recent bloodshed has far surpassed even Nuevo Laredo's gory standards of tolerance.

The underlying reason for the violence of Nuevo Laredo has been its emergence as the principal

"Mexican connection" along the 1,200-mile Texas-Mexican border for the smuggling of heroin, opium, cocaine and marijuana into the United States.

Mexico itself has in the view of veteran narcotics officials become the principal narcotics pipeline because of the tightened surveillance of the ports of entry along the American Eastern seaboard and the Canadian border.

And Nuevo Laredo now lies along a major narcotics thoroughfare that runs northward from Mexico City and Monterrey along Highway 85, funneling into the valley of Texas.

The border region is a sieve to smugglers. Thousands of cars and pedestrians swarm across the international bridge into Laredo, Tex., each day. In many places the Rio Grande can easily be forded by a determined man with a backpack.

Easy Access

There are many points at which cotton grows and cattle graze in the riverbed and a truck can drive across its width. Hundreds of small, private planes used for crop-dusting and ranch-to-ranch transport can easily be converted into drug conveyers.

Within the past year the Nixon Administration has sought to prod the Mexican government into stricter enforcement activity in an area where police officials have traditionally tended to wink or doze or enrich themselves.

President Nixon has conferred with Mexican President Luis Echevarria. Director John E. Ingersoll of the Justice Department's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs has met with Mexican Atty. Gen. Pedro J. Ojeda Paullada. Ojeda's son summered this year with the family of U.S. Atty. Gen. Richard Kleindienst.

The amity, at least at the highest level of officialdom, has rarely run so thick on both sides of the

border. But at the operational level—on the streets of Nuevo Laredo—the frustrations of the lawmen, both American and Mexican, are considerable.

One narcotics official, speaking of recent reverses in the joint campaign to reduce the drug flow across the border, refers despondently to the "Mexican dis-connection."

Such is the setting in which the violence has flourished here for more than a year between police and rival gangs, such as the Reyes Prunedas and the Gayton Clan who once feuded fiercely for control of the lucrative drug stream that flowed along Highway 85 past their ranches.

Principal Figure

Police on both sides of the border as well as knowledgeable residents of Nuevo Laredo identify as the principal figure in the town's underworld elite Francisco Javier Bernal Lopez, who seems to relish the two nicknames that the press has conferred upon him: El Padrino (the Godfather) and El Abogado Del Diablo (the Devil's Advocate).

Bernal, an attorney, is a heavy-set, moustachioed man of imposing presence who habitually carries a gun in his belt and sometimes a .45-caliber machine gun at his shoulder. He openly acknowledges that his clientele consists of drug traffickers as well as

the tough pistoleros, or hired guns, who drift up from the interior's farmlands to make a quick dollar and others engaged in what is not conventionally considered as upright enterprise.

Bernal emerged from obscurity some 10 months ago to preside over the feuding criminal factions in this border region. Police and Mexican federal authorities ascribe to him an important role in governing Nuevo Laredo's drug smuggling underworld.

"He is the only one with the brains to run the organization," said one high-ranking Mexican law enforcement official sent here to bring the lawless state of affairs under control. "The rest are ill-

Bernal denies the accusations. He replies that the CIA and FBI were responsible for some of the killings. "I do my work. And my work is defending people," Bernal said at a recent street corner press conference.

On Aug. 29 he walked into the federal building with two bodyguards to answer a subpoena issued by a special attorney for

the government, Salvatore Del Toro Rosales. Authorities questioned Bernal, for more than two hours on events that led up to the assassination last July 28 of Federal Police Commandant Everardo Perales Rios, who has run an aggressive campaign against drug smuggling during a six-week tenure that ended with his death.

Signal Event

The murder of Perales, who was sent to Nuevo Laredo to head the Mexican federal policy presence in the state of Tamaulipas, was a signal event in the border drug war.

During his short-lived incumbency Commandant Perales hauled in more drugs than had been seized in Nuevo Laredo in the previous quarter of a century, according to narcotics officials, including a kilo of heroin with a retail value of \$200,000, three tons of marijuana and caches of cocaine and opium.

As the pace of his anti-smuggling activities picked up momentum there were threats both against Perales and against an American narcotics agent working with him along the border. Word filtered back that a \$3,000 contract had been issued on the U.S. agent's life and his superiors in the Bureau of Narcotics pulled him back

Drugs and Death: The Mexican Connection

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Foreign Service

NUEVO LAREDO, Mexico, Sept. 2—Oblivious to the violence, the American tourists tramp through the sun-baked Early Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer main drag, Guerrero Avenue, pushing their way through the tax-free bazaars heaped with tax-free liquor, cigarettes, cut-rate jewelry and hand-crafted schlock.

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"He is the only one with the brains to run the organization," said one high-ranking Mexican law enforcement official sent here to bring the lawless state of affairs under control. "The rest are illiterate hoodlums."

Bernal denies the accusations. He replies that the CIA and FBI were responsible for some of the killings. "I do my work, and my work is defending people," Bernal said at a recent street corner press conference.

He also contends that in several drug seizures and arrests Mexican police stood back while more aggressive U.S. narcotics agents took the initiative. It is Bernal's one accusation that some law enforcement officials concede is not wholly without foundation.

Under the protocols governing American narcotics operations here, U.S. agents can offer various forms of assistance at the request of Mexico. Such acts of assistance, say knowledgeable officials, have at times taken an active form. This was recently made evident by underworld threats here to kill an American agent assigned to work with Mexican federal police.

Authorities questioned Bernal last Tuesday for more than two hours on events that led up to the assassination last July 23 of Federal Police Commandant Everardo Perales Rios, who had run an aggressive campaign against drug smuggling during a six-week tenure that ended with his death.

The murder of Perales, who was sent to Nuevo Lar-

STATINTL

TAMPA, FLA.
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KENNETH F. JOHNSON, an associate professor of political science at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, says he and his family were deported from Mexico because he was accused of working for the Central Intelligence Agency.

"They tried to get to confess to espionage," Johnson said Friday. "They accused me of being a front for the CIA. I signed the statement admitting to interfering in their political affairs after they threatened to throw our 4-month-old baby out of a window and say it was an accident."

Johnson, 38, who was a Fulbright scholar in Argentina in 1967, said he was in Mexico to research a revision of his book, "Mexican Democracy: A Critical View."

27 AUG 1972

St. Louis Professor, Deported by Mexico, Denies Spy Charge

Special to The New York Times

ST. LOUIS, Aug. 26 -- A political science professor who has extensive contacts among guerrilla and leftist sources in Latin America was deported from Mexico this week and accused, he said, of being a foreign intelligence agent.

Kenneth F. Johnson was held in custody by Mexican immigration officials for two and a half days and extensively interrogated, he said, before being released on Thursday. His wife and 4-month-old daughter were also held in custody for 48 hours.

Mr. Johnson is an associate professor of political science at the University of Missouri at St. Louis and the author of a book that is critical of the Mexican Government. He said he was in Mexico to conduct interviews with political dissidents for a revision of the book, called "Mexican Democracy: A Critical Review."

Some of the interviews were with top leaders of the Party for National Action, a far-left underground political party.

The 39-year-old professor and his family were arrested Monday night at their hotel suite in Mexico City by immigration agents and taken to a prison complex where he was interrogated, Mr. Johnson said in an interview.

"They wanted for me to admit I really was working for the Central Intelligence Agency, Russia or Cuba," he said. "I would not do that."

He said he was released after signing a statement in which he admitted being technically guilty of a diplomatic charge of intervening in the internal affairs of Mexico.

A top Mexican official reportedly said, however, that Mr. Johnson was expelled because of "some irregularities in his papers." The official said Mr. Johnson was in Mexico on a tourist permit but was found to be working, which is illegal.

NEW YORK TIMES

6 SEP 1971

How an Heir Escaped Jail by Air

By ANTHONY RIPLEY

Special to the New York Times

BROWNSVILLE, Sept. 5—There is a world of international adventurers, of would-be soldiers of fortune who, for a price, can be hired to take on the most outlandish schemes—from aerial bombing of a Latin American capital to training a mercenary army.

It is a world populated by part-time private investigators, by restless former members of the United States Army Special Forces, by ex-convicts and by citizens who hold respectable jobs and occasionally disappear for a few weeks.

It was a man known in this world, Victor E. Stadter, a 50-year-old Californian, who was at the controls of a small rented airplane that landed at Brownsville, Tex., shortly before midnight on Aug. 18 to add the last touch to an extraordinary prison escape.

With Mr. Stadter in the airplane was Joel David Kaplan, 44, an heir to his father's wealth, who was given to international intrigue and who, relatives feared, might die in a Mexican prison if forced to serve out a 28-year sentence for murder. Kaplan maintains that the murder charge is false.

Earlier that night while prison guards were watching a movie in the Santa Maria Acatitla Penitentiary near Mexico City, a helicopter dropped inside the walls, picked up Kaplan and another prisoner and disappeared.

Kaplan had been in prison nine years, and relatives say it was necessary to bring him into the United States legally so that he could claim an inheritance held in a trust fund in New York City.

So Mr. Stadter and Kaplan notified the United States Customs at Brownsville that they were arriving and they were met, searched and then cleared. Kaplan is now said to be in the United States in hiding.

Sources in the paramilitary underground said the original estimate of the cost of the rescue was \$50,000. Whether that figure includes full payment for his rescuers is not known.

Mr. Stadter, who apparently masterminded the escape, was reached by telephone at his home in Glendora, Calif.

"Not another person alive knows this story but me," he said. "We were very careful so that no one person would know everything."

He added with a dash of cockiness that the rescue was "just a day's work, I've been doing this for 20 years."

Of Kaplan, he said that "Joel needs help" and that he would be kept in hiding until things quieted down.

In Sausalito, Calif., where Kaplan's sister, Mrs. Judith Dowis, lives in a big Spanish mission-style house, there was an air of relief last week.

"I couldn't be happier," said Mrs. Dowis, a 40-year-old divorcee.

She said her understanding was that her brother could not claim his inheritance, held at the United States Trust Company in New York, unless he was legally in the United States.

The administrator of the trust, Barry Waldorf, contacted by telephone in New York, said only: "I am not free to give you any kind of a comment on anything to do with his affairs."

Not Sought by F.B.I.

A spokesman for the United States Department of Justice said that Kaplan is not sought by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Little formal interest has been shown by the Mexican Government in obtaining the return of Kaplan.

And in Mexico City, his attorney, Victor Velazquez, 74, said that no Mexican law had been broken in the escape.

He explained that there is a gap in Mexican law regarding escapes from prison. It is only a crime to break out of prison if violence is used.

"No violence was used," Mr. Stadter said. "There was nothing."

Mr. Velazquez said he was very happy that Kaplan had been freed because he was convinced he was innocent. He added, with a touch of humor, that it "is in keeping with the age of Apollo to escape upwards."

Served in War

Those who knew Kaplan before his conviction said he was intrigued by what one man called "the swamp of Caribbean politics" when he began working in his late father's sugar and molasses business after serving in the Navy in World War II. Kaplan grew up in Ridgefield, Conn., and attended the New Mexico Military Institute.

"His only interest was politics," said one source who has known him many years.

The same source said he was fond of intrigue and disguises and that he had used false glasses and a British seaman's identity when he entered Mexico in 1961. He was with three other men, one of them a business associate, Luis M. Vidal Jr., whom Mr. Velazquez described as a gun-runner.

Strange Business Connections

Kaplan at the time was president of the American Sucrose Company and Mr. Vidal was the company's treasurer.

It was one of several unusual business connections Kaplan had. Another was Afratronics Incorporated, which was designed to assist the electronic and industrial development of new African nations. Afratronics had no assets or physical facilities, just a New York mailing address, and it listed four African leaders as "management consultants."

The body of a man said to be Mr. Vidal was found shot four times in the head and buried in a shallow grave in Mexico in November, 1961.

Mr. Velazquez said that the body was that of a heavy, bald man in his 80's with bad teeth and a straight nose and that Mr. Vidal was in his 30's, dark-haired, flat-nosed and had good teeth. No fingerprints and no X-rays of the teeth were ever taken, Mr. Velazquez said.

28-Year Murder Sentence

Mexican authorities thought the body was Mr. Vidal's, however, and Kaplan was

convicted and sentenced to 28 years in prison for the murder.

Over the years, several plans to free Kaplan from prison were tried unsuccessfully. A source close to the family said that hundreds of thousands of dollars had been spent in escape attempts.

One plan involved hiding Kaplan in a laundry truck. Another involved attempting to bribe the prison warden to drive him out in the warden's personal car to meet a waiting jet airplane.

Another man carried 150,000 pesos—about \$120,000—into the jail in an attempt to buy Kaplan's release.

Health Reported Failing

Meanwhile Kaplan's health was reported to be failing in jail, and members of his family were increasingly concerned. His sister said he was suffering from emphysema, liver trouble and other ailments.

"He may be a vegetable by the end of his time there," wrote one of those who arranged escape attempts after his visit to Kaplan in the prison. "He goes" through periods of deep depression, is at times desperate in mind, thought and actions—sort of grasps for straws to try and get out. As a result he is an easy mark for some fast-talking inmates with a sure plan."

The story of the escape, as pieced together from reports in the United States and Mexican press, interviews with those involved and with United States Government officials, is as follows:

A Bell plastic-top helicopter was purchased from Natrona Services, Inc., a uranium-exploration company in Casper, Wyo., for an amount reported to have been \$25,000. It left an airport at McAllen, Tex., the morning before the escape, and, making several stops on the way, arrived in Mexico City on the evening of Aug. 18.

When it got to the jail, all but five prison guards were watching a motion picture, "The Altar of Blood," and the helicopter landed in the jail's large rear patio.

Kaplan and another prisoner, Carlos Antonio Contreras,

30 AUG 1971

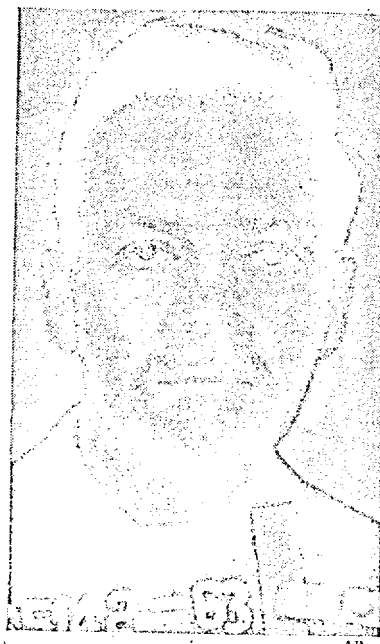
MEXICO:

The Great Escape

Not a detail had been left to chance. The evening roll call was over and, inside, the sturdy blockhouse at the Santa Marta Acatilla Prison near Mexico City, all but five of the jail's 125 guards were safely out of the way—watching a movie called "The Altar of Blood." At this opportune moment, a helicopter bearing the blue and white colors of the Mexican Attorney General's office fluttered into the prison courtyard. And with that, two prisoners sprinted from a hiding place, jumped into the waiting chopper and vanished over the wall without a shot being fired. All in all, it was a remarkably well-executed escape from one of Mexico's toughest maximum-security prisons. But there was far more to it than that. For the daring jailbreak marked the reopening of an obscure but fascinating international mystery.

Rumor: The escapees were a 41-year-old New York molasses dealer, Joel David Kaplan, who was serving a 30-year sentence for murder, and his cellmate, Carlos Contreras Castro, 35, a convicted counterfeiter. Just after the Bay of Pigs invasion ten years ago, Kaplan became the central figure in a bizarre international incident when, on the basis of shaky circumstantial evidence, he was extradited from Spain to Mexico on charges of having murdered a so-called "business associate," Luis Vidal. At the time, there was widespread speculation that Kaplan was working for the Central Intelligence Agency. Indeed, rumor had it that he had killed Vidal in order to break up the sale of \$140,000 worth of Mexican arms to the Caribbean Legion, a group dedicated to the overthrow of both left- and right-wing Latin American dictators. That speculation was fueled even further a few years later when the J.M. Kaplan Fund—headed by the fugitive's uncle—was identified by members of the U.S. Congress as a conduit for CIA funds.

Naturally enough, many observers were quick to give the CIA credit for Kaplan's spectacular jailbreak. Only the CIA, they contended, could have masterminded so involved and expensive



Joel Kaplan: Long gone?

a plot. And even Kaplan's lawyer claimed that he never for a minute doubted his client's affiliation with the CIA. But it was by no means an open-and-shut case. For other informed sources disputed the CIA theory entirely, suggesting that the escape had been hatched by another well-organized and well-financed secret organization—the Mafia. Far from being a U.S. agent, these insiders argued, Kaplan was a kingpin in the illicit drug trade and had been freed from prison by his friends in the underworld.

About the only thing that was certain was that Kaplan and Castro were long gone. Mexican officials said that their helicopter (allegedly piloted by an American named Harvey Orville Dayle) had dropped the pair off in Actopan, some 100 miles north of Mexico City. There, they switched to a light Cessna airplane rented earlier in the week in Phoenix, Ariz. Sometime later, the two fugitives parted company. Castro was said to have headed for freedom in Guatemala, and Mexican police were busily checking out reports that Kaplan had flown north to Brownsville, Texas, and then on to Sausalito, Calif. And at the end of the week, FBI agents in San Francisco had reportedly joined in the intensive search.

30 AUG 1971

MEXICO

Whirlaway

Most of the 136 guards at Mexico City's Santa Maria Acatitla prison were watching a movie with the prisoners last week when a Bell helicopter, similar in color to the Mexican attorney general's, suddenly clattered into the prison yard. Some of the guards on duty presented arms, supposing that the helicopter had brought an unexpected official visitor. What they got was a different sort of surprise. As the chopper set down on the paving stones, two prisoners dashed out of Cell No. 10. The men were airborne in less than two minutes. One of the most enterprising jailbreaks in modern times had been accomplished without a shot being fired.

The more notable of the two escapees was Joel David Kaplan, 44, a New York businessman and nephew of Molasses Tycoon Jacob M. Kaplan, whose J.M. Kaplan Fund was named in a 1964 congressional investigation as a conduit for CIA money for Latin America. The younger Kaplan had been convicted in 1962 for the Mexico City murder of his New York business partner, Louis Vidal Jr. Kaplan claimed at the trial that Vidal, who had been involved in narcotics and gunrunning, had

constructed an elaborate plot to disappear. The murder victim, Kaplan maintained, was not even Vidal, and indeed, serious doubts were raised about the body's identity. When Kaplan took it on the lam, he was accompanied by Carlos Antonio Contreras Castro, a Venezuelan counterfeiter.

The escape plans had apparently been completed the day before when an American man visited Cell No. 10 and looked over the prison yard. He was accompanied by both men's wives. (Kaplan had married a Mexican woman—the only way he could have visitors, he said—without bothering to divorce New York Model Bonnie Sharie.) After the escape, Kaplan and Castro switched to a small Cessna at a nearby airfield and were flown to La Pesca airport near the Texas border, where two more planes awaited them. One flew Castro to Guatemala; the other flew Kaplan to Texas and then on to California. Kaplan used his own name when he passed U.S. customs at Brownsville. Both the helicopter, which was later found abandoned, and the Cessna had been bought in the U.S., at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

No James Bond. At week's end neither man had been caught. Kaplan's Mexican attorney declared that his client was a CIA agent and that the rescue had been engineered by the agency. But a spokesman for Jacob Kaplan pooh-poohed all that. "People are determined to substitute James Bond for the Kaplan family name," he said, though he could offer no explanation of just who had carried out the spectacular stunt. In Mexico, meanwhile, Attorney General Julio Sánchez Vargas was forced to resign, and prison officials and all 136 guards were arrested for questioning. The movie, after all, had been the first shown at the prison in two years.

STATINTL

21 AUG 1971

STATINTL

Did the CIA engineer the escape?

MEXICO CITY (UPI) — The guards presented arms when the small blue helicopter landed in the courtyard of Santa Marta Acatitla federal prison, assuming it brought a visiting dignitary. Instead, a convicted American murderer and a Venezuelan counterfeiter scrambled aboard and escaped.

Before the guards in the towers realized what was happening, the two took off in the rain and skimmed away without a trace.

Police placed prison officials under arrest Thursday and issued an alert for another American believed to have engineered the spectacular escape from the maximum security prison Wednesday evening.

Millionaire convict

They identified the two escaped convicts as Joel David Kaplan, 42, a former New York millionaire importer serving a 26-year term for murder, and his cellmate, Carlos Antonio Contreras Castro of Venezuela, who was serving a sentence for counterfeiting and forgery.

Kaplan is a nephew of J.M. Kaplan, president of the J.M. Kaplan Fund of New York. Testimony before the U.S. Congress described the fund as a philanthropic organization created as a conduit for Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funds.

A police spokesman said the man believed to have engineered the escape and perhaps piloted the helicopter was an American, whom they identified as Orville Dale. Dale visited Kaplan at the

prison Wednesday only a few hours before the escape.

Kaplan had been convicted of the murder in 1931 of Puerto Rican Luis M. Vidal. The unmarked helicopter was set down in the Santa Marta Acatitla prison yard during a heavy rain. Afterwards the guards on the watchtowers said they thought it carried a visiting dignitary and they presented arms.

Guards arrested

"It was all a question of a few minutes," one guard said.

Warden Jose Luis Campes Burges said, "all those responsible for the custody and security of the jail have been placed under arrest" during the investigation. Riot police ringed the prison Thursday morning not letting anyone out.

Police sent out a general alert to all airports and airfields in the country and extra vigilance was reported on both the U.S. and the Guatemalan borders. There were reports the two might try to flee to Honduras or Venezuela.

Kaplan, who never admitted his guilt, was the owner of a molasses importing firm based in New York. He is considered a millionaire. His Mexican wife, Irma Vazquez Calderon de Kaplan, was being held for questioning by police.

Prison officials said both Kaplan and Contreras Castro had attempted to escape from the maximum security prison last February hidden in a truck, but were discovered. They were not disciplined, the officials said.

Police agents were sent to a private airfield at Venta Prieta, about 100 miles north of Mexico City, where a helicopter answering the description of the getaway aircraft was seen Tuesday.

The helicopter disappeared from the international airport radar screen Wednesday as it headed south over the mountains that surround Mexico City.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
EXAMINER
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EXAMINER & CHRONICLE
S - 640,004
AUG 21 1971

Mexico Holds 3 in Escape; Copter Found

Special to The Examiner

MEXICO CITY — Two taxi drivers and a milkman have been arrested as suspects in the mysterious helicopter escape of New Yorker Joel David Kaplan and his Venezuelan cellmate.

At the same time Kaplan's Mexican lawyer — who claimed the 42 year old convicted murderer was a CIA agent — said that his client broke no Mexican law when he escaped from the prison here because no such law is on the books.

"It is a principle of Mexican law that a crime must be specifically mentioned in the Federal penal code," said attorney Victor Velasquez.

No Trace Here

Meantime, in the Bay Area there was no trace of Kaplan despite recurring reports that he fled to Sausalito.

The district attorney's office here announced the arrest of the taxi drivers and the milk driver last night. He reported that the helicopter used in the escape from Santa Marta Acatitla Prison Wednesday had been found about 10 miles east of Matamoros on the Texas border.

A spokesman for the office said earlier reports that the aircraft had been found at La Pesca, 150 miles south of Brownsville, Tex., were "confused" and that the helicopter was not found there.

Pilot Got Ride

Police said one of those arrested was Pedro Cortina, a milkman who gave the helicopter pilot, identified as Roger Herschner, a ride to the edge of Matamoros.

Police said Herschner then took a taxi driven by Lorenzo Cabazos and later transferred to another taxi driven by Manuel Montes Sierra, who drove him to the Brownsville bus terminal. The two cab drivers were arrested.

Also arrested was Miguel Milan, whose home is less than a mile from the spot where the copter was found. Police said the aircraft would be brought to Mexico City on a trailer.

Kaplan, 45, was serving a 30-year sentence for the death of Luis Vidal, a New York businessman. Carlos Contreras, who shared a cell with Kaplan, was convicted of fraud and robbery.

Sausalito Goal

The district attorney's office said police believe Kaplan left for Sausalito, Calif., and Contreras for Guatemala.

According to the district attorney's reconstruction of the escape, the pair flew by helicopter to Actopan, about 100 miles north of Mexico City and from there by light plane to La Pesca, where they are thought to have taken separate planes to Sausalito and Guatemala.

The district attorney's office said police still are holding Kaplan's wife, Irma, for questioning.

WASHINGTON POST

21 AUG 1971

STATINTL

Mexican Police Ask FBI To Arrest U.S. Jailbreaker

From News Dispatches

MEXICO CITY, Aug. 20—

Mexican police today asked the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation to arrest a 42-year-old New York murder convict who escaped aboard a helicopter from a federal penitentiary Wednesday night.

Joel David Kaplan, who his defense attorney said was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Carlos Antonio Contreras Castro, a Venezuelan counterfeiter, fled the maximum security prison in one of the most spectacular escapes in Mexico prison annals.

The attorney general's office said one of the two escapees, presumably Kaplan, was flown to Brownsville, Tex., and Sausalito, Calif., after transferring from the helicopter to a Cessna single-engine plane about 300 miles northeast of Mexico City.

The office said it believed

that Contreras Castro had flown in a second Cessna to Guatemala.

It said both Cessnas had been rented in Phoenix, Ariz., and that the helicopter had been rented from Natrola Service, Inc., of Casper, Wyo. A report said the helicopter was found abandoned last night near La Pesca.

The helicopter, painted in the blue and white colors of the Mexican attorney general's office, swooped into the yard of the Santa Maria Acatitla Prison near Mexico City and plucked the two to freedom.

Mexican police identified the pilot of the helicopter as Roger Guy Herschner of Glendora, Calif.

The attorney general's office also requested the cooperation of national police in Central America in the search for the two escapees.

Police also sought a man

and a woman seen in a car whose lights lit the airfield where they switched to the light plane.

Kaplan was serving a 28-year sentence for the premeditated murder of Luis M. Vidal in 1961. Contreras Castro, 35, of Tarachi, Venezuela, Kaplan's cellmate, was serving nine years for counterfeiting and forgery.

Victory Velazquez, Kaplan's defense attorney, said that he never doubted that his client was a CIA agent, who had come to Mexico in 1961 on a secret mission. Kaplan entered Mexico with a false British passport in 1961, police said.

The J. M. Kaplan Fund of New York, of which Kaplan's uncle, J. M. Kaplan, is the president, has been identified as a CIA conduit by Congressional investigators.



JOEL D. KAPLAN

... flees north

NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

STATINTL

EVENING - 623,245
WEEKEND - 354,797

AUG 20 1971

Helicopter Jailbreaker Is No 007, Says Uncle

BY DAIRY CUNNINGHAM

New York philanthropist J.M. Kaplan claims he hasn't heard from his estranged nephew Joel David Kaplan since the 41-year-old heir's latest international escapade—a daring escape from a Mexican prison by helicopter.

"Joel is a troubled person. But his problems are his own problems," the wealthy molasses tycoon said through a family spokesman.

Because of the nephew's family ties to his uncle's J. M. Kaplan Fund, an acknowledged CIA "conduit," people are determined to substitute 'James Bond' for the Kaplan family name," the spokesman added.

Officials at the Santa Marta Acatitla prison said the

blue chopper landed behind the prison dormitory while most of the inmates were watching a movie. Kaplan and a Venezuelan-born convict, Antonio Castro, were whisked up and away beyond the prison walls.

The district attorney's office in Mexico City said it had learned that the helicopter had been rented from Natrola Service Inc., Casper, Wyo., and flown by Roger Guy Herschmer, 29, of Glendora, Cal.

It said the chopper was found abandoned last night near the Gulf Coast fishing village of La Presca, about 150 miles south of Brownsville, Tex., and some 300 miles northeast of Mexico City.

The escapees switched at La Presca to separate Cessna planes that had been rented in Phoenix, Ariz., the office said, Kaplan flying by way of Brownsville to Sausalito, Calif., and Contreras possibly to Guatemala. The plane carrying Kaplan was said to have been piloted by a Victor E. Stadler, whose home address was not given.

The FBI in San Francisco, across the bay from Sausalito, confirmed that Kaplan was being sought in that area.

Kaplan, whose checkered past included a widely-publicized assault on his shapely pin-up wife, Bonnie Sharie, before their divorce in 1958, was serving a 23-year sentence for the murder of his business partner, Luis Mel-

chior Vidal in 1931.

The mysterious case attracted national attention because of suggestions that Vidal, also a New Yorker, had been involved in gun-running to both pro and anti-Castro groups.

In Mexico City, attorney Victor Melendez, who defended Kaplan in the murder case, was quoted as saying that he believed Kaplan was a CIA agent and that the escape had been engineered by that agency.

The Kaplan Fund was later identified by Congressman Wright Patman of Texas as a "secret conduit" for transmission of CIA funds abroad. The fund's 79-year-old founder, whose full name is Jacob M. Kaplan, later acknowledged that he had funneled \$1-million to schools in Mexico and Central America, feeling it was his "patriotic duty to do so."

The \$20,000,000 J. M. Kaplan Fund was based on the fortune Kaplan accumulated through his South American sugar interests and as president of the Welch Grape Co.

Joel Kaplan was arrested by Interpol in Spain in 1962 and tried in 1964. In 1967, the Mexican Supreme Court upheld the 23-year sentence.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
EXAMINER
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AUG 20 1973

A CIA Touch To Jailbreak

Fugitive May Be in Sausalito

By Jane Eshleman Conant

The cloak-and-dagger escape of mystery man Joel David Kaplan from a Mexico City jail, reportedly to Sausalito, may have been engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency, according to speculation in various quarters today.

And it was an urgent affair, The Examiner learned.

The pilot who flew the 45 year old New Yorker out of Mexico, and allegedly to the Bay Area, tried to acquire the getaway plane "in a big hurry" on Sunday, Aug. 8.

'A Little Funny'

He went to a Southern California aircraft sales firm and said he "had to be in Albuquerque the next day," the sales manager said, adding:

"He came on too strong. The owner thought there was something a little funny about it and turned him down."

The pilot, identified as Victor E. Stadler, then went to another Southern California sales agency, it was learned. There, he traded his own old two-engine Cessna 310 for the newer, single-engine Cessna 210 in which the escape flight was completed.

His wife said today he is "out of town — where he is, I don't know."

CIA Connection

She declined to discuss the matter "until my husband is here with me," but said she has no idea when he will return.

Meantime, Kaplan's attorney, Victor Velazquez, said in Mexico City that it is "a well known fact" that the fugitive was a CIA agent.

"He didn't try to hide it," Velazquez said.

He said Kaplan had openly acknowledged he had done work for the CIA, and added:

"I often wondered what might have motivated him, and a member of his family told me it was his spirit of adventure."

The attorney insisted he didn't know who helped Kaplan and a cellmate flee the Mexican jail by helicopter Wednesday night. But his remarks led to speculation that it was a CIA "rescue mission."

Whether Kaplan was actually brought to Sausalito remained a mystery.

Spy Role?

The federal attorney general's office in Mexico City said he reached the Marin County bayshore town, but did not elaborate.

Police there said they knew nothing about it. An FBI spokesman in San Francisco said "We don't have anything on it at this time. We are looking into it."

Meanwhile there was all sorts of talk about Kaplan's possible spy role, and his part in an alleged "murder-that-didn't-take-place" near Mexico City in 1961.

Attorney Velazquez said he is a nephew of J. M. Kaplan of New York, founder of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, incorporated in Delaware in 1944 as a tax-exempt charity.

CIA Cover

The House tax subcommittee of Rep. Wright Patman said some years ago that the Kaplan Fund was a "financial cover for the disbursement of CIA funds."

There were possible CIA overtones in the asserted murder of which Kaplan was convicted, and for which he was serving a sentence in the Marta Acatilla Prison, Mexico City.

He was arrested after a body identified as that of Luis Melchior Vidal, a Puerto Rico-born American businessman, was found beside a road south of Mexico City in 1961.

Velazquez and Kaplan argued that the body was not that of Vidal, who, they claimed, had been involved in a deal to provide arms to persons hoping to overthrow "dictatorships" in Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Fled to Cuba

The deal collapsed because the CIA put in its oar, the attorney alleged. He said Vidal fled Mexico to Cuba and was not murdered, by Kaplan or anyone else.

Kaplan and his cellmate, Carlo Antonio Contreras, 24, a Venezuelan, were plucked from a yard behind their jail dormitory Wednesday night by a helicopter painted in the blue and white colors of the Mexican attorney general's office.

Prison guards, it was reported, thought it was an official plane and presented arms as it landed.

Kaplan and Contreras ran from the jail, got aboard and were whisked away.

The federal attorney general's office said the helicopter took the men to La Pesca, a fishing village on the Gulf Coast some 300 miles north-east of Mexico City.

There, the office said, Kaplan was put into a Cessna 210 with the numbers N9462-X and was flown to Brownsville, Tex., and thence to Marin County.

Contreras boarded another Cessna, No. N9364-X, and was believed taken to Guatemala.

The official spokesman said the helicopter was flown by Roger Guy Herseliner, 23, of Glendora, Los Angeles County. The Cessna which allegedly picked up Kaplan was piloted by Stadler, he declared.

Plane Sold

Neither could be located immediately.

The Mexico authorities said the helicopter had been rented from the "Natrola Service," of Casper, Wyo. This turned out to be the Natrona Service, a mineral claims survey firm operated by John McGuire.

A Natrona spokesman said the helicopter, a Bell four-seater — "a small one" — was sold, not rented, about 10 days ago.

It was "surplus equipment," the spokesman said, adding that records were not immediately available to show to whom it was sold.

Meantime, in Mexico City, Maj. Juan Tovia Martinez, chief of security at the prison: his assistant, Andres Duenas Sosa, and five subordinates were held for investigation. Those whose negligence contributed to the escape will receive "the strongest punishment," authorities said.

7 JUL 1971

Fascist terror directed at Mexican left

STATINTL

By Norma Lisi and Maria de Lourdes Garcia A.
Special to the Guardian

Mexico City

As student demonstrators began a march from the Polytechnic Institute to the monument of the revolution in central Mexico City on June 10, they were attacked by the Falcons, an armed fascist group. The attack and ensuing violence by the Falcons resulted in about 40 deaths, according to the most reliable sources.

The demonstration had been planned by persons from the organizing committees of the 1968 student movement, including some leaders recently released from prison. The original aim of the demonstration was to support students in Monterrey whose fight for the repeal of a law that threatened university autonomy had been repressed with violence.

However, after the president of Mexico, Luis Echeverria, dramatically "arranged" the situation in Monterrey, the students in Mexico City were divided. Students at some schools openly opposed the demonstration, while others wanted to hold it anyway to focus public attention on some 40 political prisoners still in jail, a strike at the Adams Chewing Gum plant and the lack of basic liberties in Mexico.

On June 10, there was an impressive gathering of government forces at the site of the planned demonstration. Anti-riot police were stationed en masse along the main avenues. Tanks and truckloads of soldiers surrounded the area. Rumors of certain bloody repression spread.

About 10,000 persons, many less than expected, gathered for the demonstration. There were few women in evidence. The rumors of violence had taken root.

After the demonstrators had advanced one block, riot police with megaphones ordered a dispersal of the assemblage. The leaders responded: "It is our constitutional right to march." When they proceeded, singing the national anthem, the riot squad fired tear gas into the crowd.

Suddenly, on signal, numerous grey-colored buses pulled up. The buses materialized through police lines even though traffic was supposedly blocked off. From the buses emerged about a thousand young fascist Falcons, carrying bamboo sticks, electric rods, pistols, M-2 carbines and submachine guns. Shots rang out from the ranks of the Falcons.

No refuge

The trapped and defenseless demonstrators could only run. They ran wherever refuge seemed possible—a hospital, a nearby teachers college, onto rooftops and into houses where inhabitants enraged by the violence hid them. But the Falcons pursued them everywhere.

Falcons entered a movie theater shouting that "we will not be responsible for your lives if you stay here." The matinee audience, mostly women and children, ran from the theater straight into the gunfire outside. Two children were killed.

While riot police looked on, arms folded, Falcons moved in on horror-stricken, unarmed demonstrators who had sought refuge among students at the teachers college.

The rampage continued for two hours, leaving according to official figures 11 dead and at least 150 wounded, many by gunshot. Union leaders and students present set the number of deaths at closer to 40.

As ambulances with wounded persons headed for the nearest hospital they were riddled by Falcon gunfire. The hunt continued into the confines of the hospital. Falcons burst into emergency rooms, terrorizing doctors and nurses and stopping doctors from operating. They ranged through the hospital, ripping off bandages from patients hidden in the wards. When they forcibly removed any wounded that could walk, a doctor declared "the police did nothing to stop them."

The Falcons are just one of a number of repressive groups on government payrolls operating in Mexico since the 1950's. Their forces, under many names and guises, have been used since that time against all progressive movements.

The Falcons themselves, reportedly under orders from the office of the mayor of Mexico City, tried to keep their identities hidden on June 10. They attacked cameramen and photographers, destroying their equipment and film whenever possible. Hours after the massacre was over, photographers turned up with stories of having been captured, blindfolded and taken to the outskirts of town where they were intimidated and interrogated before being released. These incidents enraged the press which reacted swiftly with articles and editorials protesting the events with an energy unknown in decades.

Immediately after the massacre, the mayor and police chief of Mexico City held press conferences where they infuriated journalists by telling them that the Falcons were only a legend.

Mayor Martinez Dominguez had been appointed by Echeverria because of the former's formidable personal power, including the backing of past president Diaz Ordaz, who had been directly responsible for the violent repression in 1968. It appears that Echeverria had found an excuse to eliminate this rival and warn the fascists that backed Martinez Dominguez that they had better work through the president of Mexico. At any rate, the mayor and police chief were removed from office with promises that the events of June 10 would be fully

20 MAR 1971

STATINTL

Mexico Says Soviets Aided Guerrillas

By Raphael Rothstein
Special to The Washington Post

MEXICO CITY, March 19—

The expulsion this week of five ranking Soviet diplomats by Mexico appears to be an indication of the Mexican government's determination to end what it views as Soviet encouragement of radical elements among the nation's students and leftists.

Since the student uprisings of October, 1968, Mexican authorities, assisted by agents of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, have vigorously sought to uncover and smash small bands of revolutionary guerrillas operating in the mountainous and underdeveloped states of Guerrero and Chihuahua.

Earlier this week the government announced the arrests of 19 leftist revolutionaries on charges of conspiracy, inciting to rebellion, robbery, homicide and illegal possession of weapons.

According to Attorney General Julio Sanchez Vargas, the suspects—16 men and three women—belong to a group called Movimiento de Accion Revolucionaria (MAR) and half of them have confessed to undergoing guerrilla training near Pyongyang, capital of North Korea, in 1968 and 1969. The purpose of their training, Sanchez said, was to organize a guerrilla uprising in Mexico that would overthrow the government and establish a Marxist regime.

The Mexican government asserts that the accused guerrillas received study grants in 1963 for Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow as part of the Mexican-Soviet cultural

exchange program. The government further alleges that the students formed a study group and came into contact with the North Korean embassy in Moscow which gave the Mexican youths financial aid.

In October, 1968, the North Korean embassy is said to have arranged for one of the Mexican students to visit Pyongyang. Following the student's return to Moscow, Attorney General Sanchez said, \$10,000 was made available by North Korea to train other Mexicans at a camp 25 miles from Pyongyang.

The attorney general added that the revolutionaries were arrested at hideouts and "guerrilla academies" in Mexico City, Acapulco and other Mexican cities. He said they had robbed a bank courier of \$84,000 in Mexico City last December and participated in a bank robbery last month in which a guard was killed.

The government of President Luis Echeverria Alvarez has publicized the alleged guerrillas' activity with uncharacteristic openness and detail, and this led some observers to speculate that the stage was being set for subsequent action.

In a tersely worded statement, Foreign Minister Emilio Rabasa announced yesterday afternoon that the following members of the Soviet embassy were considered persona non grata and have been ordered to leave Mexico "as soon as possible."

Dimitri Diakonov, charge d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy and Russia's top-ranking official in Mexico since Ambassador Igor Kolosovsky returned to Moscow for home leave last month; First Secretary Boris Kolmiakov; Second Secretary Boris Voskoboinikov; Chief of Consular Affairs Oleg Netchiporenko; and Alexandre Bolchakov, whose title was not announced.

The foreign ministry statement gave no reason for the expulsions and Foreign Minister Rabasa declined all comment.

It is believed that the ouster of the Soviet diplomats is meant as a stern warning to the Soviet Union that Mexico will not tolerate Russian involvement in domestic leftist agitation either through the Soviet embassy or the embassies of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Cuba.

It is widely believed here that Soviet support of indigenous guerrilla activities is fairly common in Latin America.

Persons familiar with the Soviet embassy here point out that the size of the staff—numbering approximately 25—is disproportionate to Russia's minimal trade and cultural relations with Mexico.

There have been disputes between Mexico and the Soviet Union in the past. In 1930 diplomatic relations were broken after Mexico charged Soviet interference in workers' organizations. Relations were restored in 1942 but became strained again in 1959 when the government expelled two Soviet diplomats thought to be involved in an illegal strike of National Railway workers.

In October, 1968, when dissident students rioted in downtown Mexico City and were fired on by government troops, the question of Soviet meddling in dissident movements in Latin America was again raised.

President Echeverria was minister of interior at the time of the 1968 riots.