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*Weekly Situation Report
on
International Terrorism*

DO WSRIT 76-009

2 March 1976

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WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

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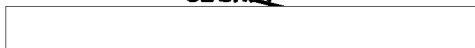
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Owens-Illinois Manager Abducted in Venezuela (Page 1)



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ARTICLES

Owens-Illinois Manager Abducted in Venezuela

On 27 February seven men abducted William E. Niehous, the vice president and manager of the Owens-Illinois glass company in Venezuela, from his home in Caracas. According to Niehous' wife, two of the kidnapers came to the front door while the family was watching television. One was wearing the full dress uniform of a Venezuelan army officer and the second, a camouflage uniform but with ordinary street shoes rather than combat boots. These individuals talked their way into the house and were immediately followed by three others who wore masks and gloves. The two remaining kidnapers stayed outside.

The men overpowered Niehous and tied up his wife, their three sons and the maid. They then injected Niehous with a blue liquid which is believed to be sodium pentathol. The kidnapers took Niehous' outdated passport, two of his three sons' passports, his car keys but not his car, and an undetermined amount of cash. They did not touch Mrs. Niehous' jewelry. On 1 March an automobile believed to be involved in the kidnapping was found in the city of Maracay. Documents and clothing belonging to Niehous were found in the car.

Niehous' abductors have thus far not demanded any ransom. In a seven-page communique signed by the "Comando Revolucionario, Operacion Argimiro Gabaldon," the kidnapers stated that Niehous had been arrested and imprisoned pending a revolutionary trial for "political and economic sabotage." The communique cited a business survey and other Owens-Illinois internal corporate correspondence as evidence of political and economic subversion on the part of the company. The Owens-Illinois office was burglarized late last year. A quantity of money was stolen, but no check was made at that time to determine if any company documents were stolen.

The communique further stated that Niehous was currently being interrogated as part of the trial process to which he had been summoned, and that any repressive measures on the part of the government would result in his death.

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The message ended by giving fraternal greetings to the Revolutionary Coordinating Junta (JCR) and its member organizations and to the Palestinians, Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians. A later letter identified Argimiro Gabaldon as a guerrilla commander of the Simon Bolivar detachment who died some years ago in Lara state.

Niehous' abductors are believed to belong to the Bandera Roja (Red Flag). The modus operandi used by the Niehous kidnapers is very similar to that employed by the BR in a kidnapping which took place three years ago. Mrs. Niehous was shown a picture of an individual who injected the victim of the previous kidnapping with a soporific and said that he resembled one of the men who took part in her husband's abduction. In a later press interview, Mrs. Niehous said that two of the kidnapers were youths she had earlier hired to cut her lawn.

The Venezuelan authorities reacted swiftly and have been raiding the houses of known or suspect BR members with no result. They have assembled composite drawings of three individuals involved in the operation and are combing their mug files for match-ups. On 1 March the President of Venezuela stated that "the government will face up to the kidnappers no matter what the price," and compared the Niehous kidnapping to the attacks on OPEC in Vienna and on the Israelis at the Munich Olympics.

The BR was formed in 1969 when radical elements of the Venezuelan Movement of the Revolutionary Left split off from the main group in order to oppose by terrorism the governments' pacification program, which offered amnesty to the guerrilla leaders of the 1960's. The BR cooperated with the small remaining guerrilla groups such as the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) and the Organization of Revolutionaries. This relationship became strained in 1973 because of the BR's penchant for conducting flamboyant operations which provoked government repression. In 1973 the government killed or imprisoned most of the BR leaders, but in January 1975 the BR, with the assistance of the FALN, staged a spectacular jail break in which 23 BR and FALN terrorists were set free. The BR leaders, Carlos Betancourt and Gabriel Puerta, are still at large. It is estimated that there are currently 50 BR activists in Venezuela.

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The abduction of William E. Niehous is an extremely sophisticated operation and is a classic example of using an act of political terrorism as "the propaganda of the deed." By putting Niehous on trial for economic crimes, the terrorists have directly interjected themselves into the Venezuelan political milieu, because at the present time the Venezuelan congress is investigating allegations of bribery of Venezuelan officials by a U.S. oil firm in Venezuela. Therefore the time is a propitious one for the terrorists to portray themselves as the defenders of the average Venezuelan. To demand a ransom for Niehous' release would tend to taint the "purity" of the terrorists' political motives with criminal ones, unless, of course, they decide to adopt the expedient of demanding ransom in kind, e.g., distribution of food and clothing to the poor.

Because of the sophistication of the operation, and because the BR communique singled out the JCR member groups but no other Latin American terrorist organizations, it is possible that the JCR may have had a hand in the planning or conception of this operation. Venezuelan terrorists are believed to have been in contact with the JCR in 1974. The current extent of the contacts Venezuelan terrorists have with the JCR or other terrorists is not known, and there is no concrete evidence to point to JCR involvement in the operation. Nevertheless, the possibility of JCR involvement will be examined closely in the days to follow. [REDACTED]

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CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST ACTS

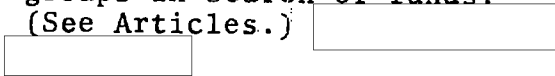
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Date: 27 February 1976
Place: Venezuela, Caracas

U.S. Businessman Kidnapped
William Niehaus, the Owens-Illinois glass company managing director in Venezuela, was kidnapped from his home by seven gunmen. A group called "Revolutionary Command" has claimed credit for the kidnapping and is threatening to kill Niehaus unless the Venezuelan government stops "a wave of repression" against the people. No demands for money were made; however, the Interior Minister told a news conference that the kidnapers apparently are "left-wing groups in search of funds." (See Articles.)

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