

Arrest of Caro Quintero points to the heart of drug running in Ibero-America

by Hector Apolinar

The confessions of Rafael Caro Quintero, who was arrested April 4 as the suspected assassin of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent Enrique Camarena Salazar, could lead to the dismantling of one of the most important drug and money-laundering networks in the Western hemisphere.

By April 8, Mexican authorities had already nabbed the top figure of the Mexican drug underworld, Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo, with 23 heavily armed bodyguards, in a raid on a villa in Puerto Vallarta, near Acapulco. Fonseca, Caro Quintero's boss, immediately began to sing as loudly as Caro Quintero himself had. Dozens of other drug-runners, state and federal judicial and security police, and members of the army are implicated. A thoroughgoing sweep of the official apparatus in the state of Jalisco is underway. Mexican authorities say the U.S. side of the networks must also be cleaned up. "We are confident that there will also be successes beyond our borders," said the attorney general's office.

Caro Quintero was arrested with seven cohorts in Costa Rica on April 4 at a ranch he owns near the capital. On April 5 he was extradited to Mexico. He has been interrogated under direction of Florentino Ventura, chief of the Federal Judicial Police's narcotics division.

Said government spokesman Francisco Fonseca Notario, "It is a question of pulling the string of the huge ball of yarn of corruption that covers the drug traffic on an international scale." To prevent leaks, only a select group of investigators know the names Caro is supplying, until the United States, Costa Rica, Peru, Colombia, and Spain can apprehend the suspects. Two U.S. buyers have already been murdered by other mafiosi since Caro's arrest.

Caro confessed to owning the marijuana plantation found by the Mexican army in Chihuahua in November 1984, with 2,000 enslaved, malnourished peasants. The 8,000 tons of marijuana the Mexican authorities burned cost Caro \$50 million, according to his own report.

Caro's arrest came after confessions by brothers Eduardo and Javier Cordero Stauffer, top businessmen in the state of Jalisco, one of Mexico's busiest financial and political areas, which serves as a center for "laundering" dirty money for Mexican drug-running. The Cordero brothers were picked up in Guadalajara, Jalisco, on charges of laundering Caro

Quintero's money and of managing his investments in 300 firms which had their main offices in Jalisco.

The Corderos disclosed Caro Quintero's whereabouts in Costa Rica, where he had escaped on March 17, three weeks after the murder of DEA agent Enrique Camarena Salazar and his colleague, Mexican pilot Alfredo Zavala Avelar. The Corderos indicated that Caro and his partners could be found at the California ranch, located some 16 kilometers from San José, Costa Rica.

The ranch had been bought by Caro and an unknown Iranian. Cordero also confessed that Caro had bought the firm Poliuretanos de Costa Rica, with Samuel Yankelewitz, brother-in-law of Costa Rican President Luís Alberto Monge. On April 8, Yankelewitz denied his association with the Corderos to the Mexican press, but admitted he was their partner "seven or eight years ago" when they arrived in Costa Rica.

On various occasions the family of Monge's wife has been accused of having relations with the group around ex-Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, a known associate of arms traffickers, real estate speculators, and international mobsters once led by Meyer Lansky. Monge's career has been managed through his ties to Lane Kirkland of the AFL-CIO, and to the State Department-AFL venture, the American Institute for Free Labor Development. Monge's other mentor, ex-President Pepe Figueres, invited drug and dirty money magnate Robert Vesco to Costa Rica, and defended him from U.S. law.

In the investigations into Caro's arrival in Costa Rica, neither the registration of the plane nor the flight by which it arrived in the country were found. Caro Quintero arrived in the wee hours at Costa Rica's international airport, but the only private flight registered that night was by a plane owned by the United Brands company, from Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

It had previously been said that Caro Quintero, upon escaping from Guadalajara, flew to the city of Caborca, Sonora, near the U.S. border, and then went by car into hiding in the village of Gusave, Sinaloa, and from there to Costa Rica. But some investigators think Caro Quintero got to Costa Rica in the United Brands plane. United Brands (formerly United Fruit) has been linked to drug trafficking since

the early 1900s, and is part of the Bank of Boston interests, which are being investigated for drug-money-laundering.

According to Caro's henchmen's confessions, he bought his Costa Rican property on the advice of his partner, "cocaine king" José Ramon Mata Ballesteros, considered chief of the Colombian cocaine connection in Mexico. Mata Ballesteros, a Honduran, was near capture in February but fled thanks to "someone's" protection.

Investments in Jalisco

Caro Quintero had large investments in the Hyatt Regency, Holiday Inn, and Fiesta Americana hotel chains, and mentioned the businessman and ex-banker Arcadio Valenzuela as one of his partners. Valenzuela was an important financier with offices in Jalisco, who owned the Banpacífico bank jointly with businessmen from the states of Sonora, Baja California, Sinaloa and Jalisco—the major drug-trafficking states in Mexico. In founding Banpacífico, Valenzuela shifted his headquarters from Hermosillo, Sonora to Guadalajara, Jalisco. He held major investments in the Jalisco hotel industry, buying the tourist complex Los Tules. In 1982-83 after the banks were nationalized, Valenzuela was investigated because the bank of which he was vice-director was carrying out a drug-money-laundering operation originating in Guadalajara and carried out in Tijuana, with the dollars afterwards moving to the United States via various exchange houses in Tijuana. After this affair, Valenzuela gave up his bank. But he continued in the hotel business, still linked to Fiesta Americana, owned by businessman Gaston Azcarraga, related to the "crème de la crème" of moneyed families in Mexico.

Ford is another important U.S. firm whose name appeared linked to Caro Quintero and the Corderos. According to investigations by two Mexican police agencies, the Corderos ran Ford Country Motors. Last year, Caro Quintero bought 300 Grand Marquis autos "as gifts." Ford is a dirty name in Mexico, because Ford dealers have been linked to such unsavory characters as Eugenio Elourduy in Mexicali, a candidate in the neo-Nazi National Action Party, and Manuel J. Clouthier, leading member of the PAN who runs the Ford dealership in Culiacán, Sin., and who was found with a warehouse full of marijuana in 1979; Don Pablo Bush, a key figure involved in shady business deals who has a large Ford dealership in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.

The role of lawyer José Rojo Coronado points toward East bloc intelligence services. Rojo was the lawyer for FALN Puerto Rican terrorist Willie "No Hands" Morales, captured after a shootout in Puebla in 1983, as well as attorney for members of the terrorist 23rd of September League which operated in the mid-'70s with support from drug-runners and Cuban intelligence. When Rojo took Caro Quintero's case, he explained: "U.S. society is decadent, degenerate, corrupt, and a danger to world peace. That country is a looter, aggressor, and I think that if Mexico manages to make that society idiotic with drugs, that's great."

A chronology of the War on Drugs

Jan. 22, United States: *Narcotráfico, SA*, Spanish-language version of *EIR* bestseller *Dope, Inc.*, published by New Benjamin Franklin House. Book names names in top drug and money-laundering networks North and South.

Feb. 1-15, United States: Bank of Boston admits violating currency reporting requirements on \$1.2 billion in cash from Swiss banks, also accepting illegal cash deposits from Angiulo organized crime family. Prosecutor William Weld implicated in coverup.

Feb. 5, Venezuela: On orders from the Cisneros family, named as "the Bronfmans of Venezuela" in *Narcotráfico, SA*, Venezuelan political police raid homes and offices of *EIR* reporters in Caracas, seize copies of *Narcotráfico, SA*. *EIR* journalists expelled within 48 hours.

Feb. 7, Mexico-United States: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique Camarena kidnaped in Guadalajara, after two-month period in which Mexican authorities had destroyed 170 hectares of poppies, burned \$10 billion worth of marijuana, and arrested or detained 64 drug traffickers.

Feb. 14, Venezuela-United States: Venezuelan plane seized in Hollywood, Fla. with cocaine on board, confirmed as belonging to Pepsi-Cola of Venezuela, run by the Cisneros family which forced banning of *Narcotráfico, SA*.

Feb. 16, Colombia-United States: Third-largest drug bust in U.S. history. U.S. Customs confiscates Avianca airline 747 jet, two days after the plane had brought 2,500 tons of cocaine (\$600 million street value) into Miami en route to Montreal. Drug was hidden in boxes of cut flowers; cut flower exports from Colombia often handled by Moonies' Unification Church.

Feb. 18, Jamaica: Air Jamaica plane busted in Miami carrying 5,900 pounds of Jamaican marijuana. A second jet, with 40 pounds, seized on Feb. 22. Air Jamaica fined \$13 million Jamaican dollars by U.S. Customs. Jamaican Transport Minister Pearnell Charles complains, "Jamaica cannot afford to pay these fines and have our ships and planes confiscated by foreign governments because of drug trafficking."

Feb. 18, Mexico-United States: *New York Times* reports,