

FBI helped pursue Pinochet's political opponents in the US

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Declassified files obtained by the *New York Times* demonstrate that in 1975 the FBI tried to track down two left-wing political opponents of Augusto Pinochet who were then suspected to be living in the US.

On May 17, 1975, according to the FBI documents, Jorge Isaac Fuentes, a Chilean citizen and alleged member of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left, was arrested in Asuncion, Paraguay. In his address book were found the names of Margaret Sun of Manhattan and Sonia Bacicalupe of Dallas. The Paraguayan police relayed the information to Robert W. Scherrer, the FBI representative in Buenos Aires at the time. The following month Scherrer wrote to General Ernesto Baeza Michaelsen, the director of Chilean intelligence, telling him that the FBI would try to locate the two women.

Fuentes was sent back to Chile, where he "disappeared" in prison. He is included among the 3,000 officially listed as killed under the Pinochet regime. A 1990 report by the Chilean government states that "his disappearance was the work of government agents."

Though the FBI checked with police and credit agencies in Dallas and New York, Margaret Sun and Sonia Bacicalupe were apparently never located. Their nationalities and present residences are reportedly unknown.

FBI officers told the *Times* that the type of cooperation involved in the arrest of Fuentes was regularly undertaken.

Pinochet was brought to power in a bloody, US-backed coup in September 1973. His regime proceeded to round up, torture and murder its left-wing and socialist opponents. In October 1975, five months after the arrest of Fuentes, Chilean officials led the formation of Operation Condor, a joint program to coordinate

spying, intimidation and murder of political dissidents by the intelligence agencies of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The idea for the program had originated in a 1968 document written by US General Robert W. Porter, the head of the US Southern Command.

FBI and CIA files relating to Operation Condor have been requested by Baltasar Garzon, the Spanish magistrate seeking Pinochet's extradition for the torture and disappearance of Spanish citizens following the 1973 coup. Though the US undoubtedly has the largest volume of documents pertaining to the torture and murder of Chilean and foreign citizens, Washington has avoided turning them over for fear of implicating former US officials who played instrumental roles in setting up the 1973 coup and in Operation Condor. While the State Department said in December 1998 that it would open "as many files as possible," those released to the *Times* this week are the first declassified since Pinochet's arrest.



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