



Ex-Salvadoran Military Leader Sentencing Continues

By BRIDGET MURPHY Associated Press BOSTON August 26, 2013 (AP)

A federal judge presiding over the immigration case of a former Salvadoran military colonel wants to know more about the status of Spain's request for the United States government to hand over the defendant for a war crimes trial.

U.S. District Judge Douglas Woodlock asked prosecutors Monday what U.S. government officials intend to do about Spain's request to hand Inocente Orlando Montano over for trial in connection with the 1989 killings of eight people, including six priests, during El Salvador's civil war.

The 70-year-old defendant has pleaded guilty to three counts of immigration fraud and three counts of perjury after his 2011 arrest in Boston, and is awaiting the judge's decision on his penalty for those crimes. Montano is among 20 people Spanish authorities indicted separately that same year in connection with the killings.

A United Nations commission has alleged Montano participated in a meeting to plot the slaying of a priest suspected of supporting rebels, resulting in the 1989 deaths known as the Jesuit massacre. Montano, once his country's vice minister of public security, has denied involvement.

Woodlock told Assistant U.S. Attorney John Capin on Monday he was concerned about the way any sentence in the immigration case would "dovetail" with the extradition process, if there was one.

Capin told the judge he wasn't sure what he'd be permitted to divulge about the matter, but Woodlock said would be expecting an answer from the prosecutor as the proceeding continued.

Stanford University professor Terry Lynn Karl, an expert in Latin American politics, testified Monday during Montano's sentencing hearing that she was "quite convinced" he knew of human rights abuses committed by his troops.

But through a Spanish translator, retired El Salvador military general Mauricio Ernesto Vargas testified there's no evidence such abuses happened.

The government has asked for a prison sentence of more than four years for Montano, saying he came to the U.S. in part to avoid possible prosecution for the massacre in El Salvador.

Montano's lawyer, Oscar Cruz Jr., has appealed for a five-year probation term. He claims his client came to the U.S. in 2001 because of financial hardships and problems after earthquakes, and an amnesty law protected Montano against prosecution at home.

Carolyn Patty Blum, a lawyer from an organization involved in seeking Montano's prosecution in Spain, said Monday she's hopeful something will come out in court about U.S. officials' intentions when it comes to the extradition request.

Montano declined comment following Monday's proceeding, which is scheduled to continue Tuesday.

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