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28Aug89 CUBA: STATE ASKS 20-YEAR SENTENCE FOR FORMER CUBAN INTERIOR MINISTER.

By **Lionel Martin**

HAVANA, Aug 28, *Reuter* - The military prosecutor has asked 20 years in jail for Cuban former interior minister Jose Abrantes and lesser sentences for six aides on charges laid after a drug-trafficking scandal rocked Cuba in July, the official newspaper *Granma* reported on Monday.

The trial ended on Sunday with final statements by the prosecuting and defence attorneys.

The three military judges, headed by Vice-Minister of the Cuban Armed Forces Ulises Rosales del Toro, are expected to announce verdicts early this week.

Abrantes was charged with abuse of authority, improper use of government money and other resources and negligence in carrying out his duties.

In his final statement on Saturday evening, according to *Granma*, the military prosecutor said that General Abrantes had failed to inform President Fidel Castro about "concrete indications" beginning in February this year that officers of his ministry were involved in drug-trafficking.

Last month a military court found 14 army and intelligence officers guilty in a drug-trafficking scandal and sent four of them before a firing squad on July 13.

Two of those executed, Lieutenant Colonel Antonio de la Guardia and Major Arnado Padron, belonged to the Interior Ministry.

General Arnaldo Ochoa, one of Cuba's leading military commanders, and his aide, Captain Jorge Martinez, both members of the Armed Forces Ministry, were also executed.

The other 10 convicted officers, all from the Interior Ministry, received long prison terms.

Granma quoted the prosecutor as saying that Abrantes "did not care to see objectively the value of information that would have led to the discovery of the drug-trafficking activities of these officers although he had chosen by the top leadership of the nation to investigate, in view of the coincidence of rumours and public accusations and information from friendly sources."

The prosecutor said there was no convincing evidence that Abrantes "had deliberately concealed or frustrated the discovery of the drug trafficking operation or that he had taken part in drug trafficking," the newspaper reported.

Abrantes was also accused of having a hard currency reserve of more than one million dollars "which was operated secretly and illegally" to acquire materials for his ministry "and sometimes also for his personal use."

Part of the money for this reserve was contributed by Lieutenant Colonel de la Guardia, one of the officers executed last month for drug trafficking.

De la Guardia headed the secret Department MC, which was responsible for circumventing the U.S. economic embargo on trade with Cuba.

The prosecutor also accused General Abrantes of having sought "dollar fever" and of exchanging Cuban pesos for U.S. dollars on the black market.

He accused Abrantes of increasing his monetary reserve by "arbitrarily and illegally acting as business partner" with a tour agency which arranged flights to Miami for temporary family visits by Cuban citizens.

Granma said Abrantes' defence attorney admitted guilt but asked for leniency on the grounds of "a deterioration of his mental capacity."

The prosecutor asked that the Cuban government deprive Abrantes and Martinez of their general's rank and that the other officers be demoted to privates.

He also asked that all illegally obtained finances and goods be confiscated and that the defendants be prohibited from holding leadership positions when they leave jail.

The military prosecutor asked for the following sentences for the other defendants:

General Pascual Martinez, former Deputy Interior Minister - 15 years in jail for abuse of authority and the improper use of government financial and material resources.

General Roberto Gonzalez, former Chief of Immigration - 11 years for abuse of authority and bribery.

Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Camero, former Director of Customs - 13 years for improper use of government money and resources and bribery.

Hector Carbonell, former director of a business enterprises controlled by Lieutenant Colonel De la Guardia - 12 years for improper use of government money and resources, bribery and illegal possession of weapons.

Lieutenant Colonel Rolando Castaneda - 10 years for abuse of authority, bribery and illegal possession of weapons.

Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Gil - eight years for bribery.

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