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Huey Newton to Return To U.S. to Face Charges

By Lionel Martin

Special to The Washington Post

HAVANA, June 24—Black Panther Party founder Huey P. Newton said today that he plans to return immediately to face what he calls false charges of murder and assault in California.

Newton, 35, who became a symbol of the angry, gun-carrying black militant in the 1960s, has been living in Cuba since he jumped bail in 1974.

The unrepentant Black Panther Party leader said the U.S. Justice Department had informed him that it would allow him to spend 10 days conferring with his attorneys in Canada or another third country without trying to extradite him.

Newton said, however, that the Canadian government had notified him today that he would be detained on arrival and sent to the United States. Newton said he plans nevertheless to fly to Canada Saturday night.

"I'm going back and my bow is

bent," he said. "I'm going back to the United States to fight false criminal charges." He said in an interview that his attorney has filed a \$100 million damages suit in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., for the U.S. government's alleged conspiracy against the Black Panther Party.

A Justice Department official said in Washington that Newton had written to Attorney General Griffin Bell about two months ago to say he would be willing to surrender if arrangements could be made to have the single outstanding federal charge of "unlawful flight to avoid prosecution" dropped. After negotiations with the Criminal Division such an agreement was reached, the official said. He said he knew of no deal for Newton to be allowed to stay in Canada first. California authorities were not immediately available for comment.

A Canadian embassy spokesman in Washington said that Newton's lawyers had been advised that he would

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not be permitted to get off the airplane if he arrived in Canada. The spokesman indicated that Newton had intended to arrive in Canada Sunday. Canadian authorities said they knew nothing of an offer to let Newton operate without hindrance for 10 days before any extradition proceedings.]

Newton served 23 months in jail for the murder of an Oakland, Calif., policeman, but the conviction was overturned on appeal. He was released in 1970 and spent the next four years working with the Black Panthers.

He helped to shift the party's emphasis from a gun-toting, leather-jacketed "off-the-pigs" approach to community-improvement programs.

In 1974, Newton was charged with assault and murder in connection with two new incidents in Oakland. He denied his guilt and failed to show up for a court appearance, forfeiting \$42,000 bail.

Newton arrived in Cuba a few months later, and has lived there since. He said that when he arrived in Cuba he saw little chance of defending himself successfully against the charges against him in the United States.

Asked what had happened during his three years in Cuba to change his mind, Newton mentioned Watergate and the public revelations about abuses by the CIA and the FBI.

"Armed with this information, I go back in order to do battle," he said. "We have new information. The political climate has changed." He paused, then added, "Somewhat."

"A change of administrations does not mean an end to the system of exploitation which I oppose," Newton said. "But there is now a more congenial atmosphere for the kind of court battle that we are going to fight. After all these revelations of recent years, the people are prepared to believe the kind of conspiracies that the government has inflicted on us."

Newton's case is being handled by attorneys Sheldon Otis, Paul Harris,

Dennis Roberts and Fred Hiestand, all of San Francisco.

They are basing part of the case on the report of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, which contains a chapter entitled "The FBI's Covert Action Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party." It describes the activities of COINTELPRO, the FBI's counterintelligence effort against radical groups.

Newton says he is not going back repentantly, renouncing his revolutionary ideas as Eldridge Cleaver did. Nor will he try to maintain a low profile, as Robert Williams did. He is still a Black Panther and believes in the future of his party. His ideas have matured, he says, but have not changed essentially. He is still a revolutionary. He still believes that fundamental transformations are needed in the United States.

Hiestand, one of Newton's lawyers, who was also interviewed in Havana, says the defense has an affidavit from one of the chief counsels of the Senate Select Committee to the effect that only the tip of the iceberg is showing in the committee report on the alleged government conspiracy against the Panthers.

Under Federal law, both parties are entitled to "discovery"—to get documents from the other party that have a bearing on the case or to get sworn statements through the questioning of witnesses.

Hiestand said that the case was argued in late May and that the court denied a government motion to dismiss the case. It ordered the parties to complete their "discovery" by September 1977.

The Black Panther lawyers say they have served their first requests for documents from the Justice Department, the FBI, the CIA, the Treasury Department, the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. postal authorities and the Departments of the Army and Air Force.

"The trick," said Hiestand, "is to use the information gathered from our case against the government to show

that Huey, in Alameda County, Calif., was the victim of a government conspiracy."

It is a little more than a decade since Newton founded the Black Panther Party in Oakland. He had just finished a year at San Francisco Law School and had decided to devote himself full time to organizing the black community—"to stop the oppression, to revolutionize the system in the United States."

With guns?

"No. We were armed for self-defense and we were armed according to the California penal code that gave residents the right to bear arms and also in accordance with federal law. So it was quite legal."

Newton's slender fingers played with tigers' teeth hanging from a thin chain around his neck. "We realized that a small party could not defeat the United States military or the U.S. police force. The guns were for self defense, to defend ourselves when we were attacked."

Newton claims that at its high point the party had 25,000 members and half a million or more sympathizers. He charges that its leaders and members were harassed, imprisoned and murdered by or in collusion with local, state or federal authorities.

Newton says that harassment increased after Black Panther chairman Bobby Seale got 38 per cent of the vote in the 1972 Oakland mayor's race.

"I always had it in mind to build a mass base, and the party was successful in doing this. But then we regressed because of some ideas set forward by people such as Eldridge Cleaver."

This was during the late 1960s when Newton was serving a three-year term for manslaughter. Newton characterizes Cleaver as an "M.F." (a media freak) who joined the party so his book would be a best-seller.

Newton says his three years in Cuba were a positive experience. When he, his wife, Gwenn and their

two children (a girl, 7, and a boy, 9) arrived in Cuba, they were given a grand tour of the island. They lived in every province of Cuba. In January 1977, they returned to Havana from a six-month stay in the city of Santa Clara. While there, Newton worked in a truck-repair shop. Gwenn taught English to doctors, and the children went to school.

He talked enthusiastically about his factory experience. "On the weekends, the workshop buses were used to take us to the beach—husbands, wives, kids and singles. We had a fine time, almost like an extended family, blacks and whites together."

Newton said he wished those two tigers' teeth on the thin chain around his neck were Black Panther teeth. He intends to rebuild the party.

Newton's Afro begins farther back on his forehead than it did a few years ago. But at 35, he is still a firebrand who believes in changing America into a socialist country.

Castro Is Conciliatory In Words to Businessmen

Reuter

HAVANA, June 24—A powerful U.S. business delegation left here today carrying presents of rum and cigars and bearing the message that American companies could find trade in Cuba.

The improving relations between the two nations were emphasized last night by Fidel Castro when he told the delegation that the present U.S. leadership "is the first administration in 18 years that is not committed to a policy of aggression and hostility toward us."

Another message stressed in four days of meetings, however, was that a full lifting of the U.S. trade embargo is crucial to better relations and the establishment of trade ties.

The delegation, the second major group of American businessmen to visit here, was said to represent more powerful interests than the first, which came from Minnesota in April.