

# Ex-Ford Execs Charged In Argentine Torture Cases

Michael Warren, Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Three former Ford Motor Co. executives were charged Tuesday with crimes against humanity for allegedly targeting Argentine union workers for kidnapping and torture after the country's 1976 military coup.

All three men are now in their 80s. Their case is part of a new wave of prosecutions focusing on corporate support for the dictators who ran Argentina in 1976-1983, and the 150-page indictment written by Judge Alicia Vence reads like a history lesson, going to considerable lengths to explain why their actions constitute crimes against humanity and why it has taken nearly four decades to result in criminal charges.

Factory director Pedro Muller, human resources chief Guillermo Galarraga and security manager Hector Francisco Jesus Sibilla are accused of giving names, ID numbers, pictures and home addresses to security forces who hauled two dozen union workers off the floor of Ford's factory in suburban Buenos Aires to be tortured and interrogated and then sent to military prisons.

All three were ordered to remain under house arrest on bail of about \$142,000 each. Galarraga and Sibilla are Argentines and Muller is described in the indictment as a Czech national.

Ford Argentina said in a statement that it was aware of the charges against the men but could not comment because the issue was still under judicial investigation.

"Ford Argentina is not a party to the case but has always kept a collaborative and open attitude with authorities and will provide all available information that may be required to clarify this situation," it said.

The Associated Press left phone messages and sent emails seeking comment from the offices of lawyers for the three former executives, but there was no response.

The judge said the executives sought to eliminate union resistance at Ford's Argentina subsidiary and clearly had inside information about the coming "dirty war" in which so-called subversives would be thrown into clandestine detention centers. She described a key meeting the day after the March 24, 1976, coup in which Galarraga told union leaders to "forget any kind of labor complaints" and all their problems would be resolved.

Witnesses recalled that union leader Juan Carlos Amoroso then asked about talks over money that workers said had been systematically removed from their paychecks. The human resources chief laughed and said, "Amoroso, give my

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greetings to Camps," the judge wrote, a reference to Gen. Ramon Camps.

At the time, Camps was a little-known figure. Named police chief of Buenos Aires province by the military junta, Camps soon ran a system of clandestine detention centers where thousands of people were taken for torture and summary execution. Camps died in 1994 after being convicted of 73 torture deaths and other crimes so wide-ranging that many of Argentina's current human rights trials involve a network of prisons known as "the Camps circuit." About 13,000 people were kidnapped, tortured and disappeared, according to official counts.

"I find it remarkable that the head of human resources at Ford would know information so sensitive such as the function that Camps would develop in the future, something almost impossible to know if the company didn't have a direct and concrete relationship with the military authorities who had overtaken the state institutions of that era," the judge wrote.

Two nights after the meeting inside the Ford factory, a heavily armed group kidnapped Amoroso at home and took him to be beaten and interrogated, according to the indictment. Other Ford union workers were bound, with bags over their heads, and beaten inside a dining area next to the factory's soccer fields, then hauled away to jails for more torture. Some were subjected to electric shocks; others were stripped naked and injured with power tools or made to undergo false executions as interrogators sought information about union leaders' whereabouts.

The indictment also says that when two of the victims' spouses went to authorities seeking information on their missing husbands, a colonel showed them a list of workers' names on a Ford company letterhead and said it was the company, not the military, that wanted the men taken away.

The former president of Ford Motors Argentina, Nicolas Courard, would have been charged as well if he hadn't died in Chile in 1989, the judge wrote.

About 5,000 workers were employed at the time by the Ford factory in suburban General Pacheco, producing the Falcon, a car that became a symbol of state terror because it was often used by military and police squads to carry off "subversives" and move them between secret detention centers.

The victims in this case include Pedro Troiani, Carlos Gareis, Jorge Constanzo, Marcelino Reposi, Adolfo Sanchez, Francisco Perrotta, Juan Carlos Ballestero, Pastor Murua, Ruben Manzano, Juan Carlos Amoroso, Fernando Groisman, Luciano Bocco, Juan Carlos Conti, Ricardo Avalos, Vicente Portillo, Carlos Propato, Luis Degiusti, Eduardo Pulega, Hugo Nunez, Ruben Traverso, Raimundo Robledo, Carlos Chitarroni, Roberto Cantelo and Hector Subaran.

Their treatment was investigated soon after the return of democracy in 1983, but the crimes later fell under a general amnesty that wasn't overturned by Argentina's Supreme Court until a decade ago. The case has developed since then and only now is coming to trial.

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