

# **Pinochet family suing over cocaine accusation**

**Published claims that former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet profited from drugs in the 1980s has needlessly distressed his family, according to a lawsuit filed by Pinochet's son.**

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**SANTIAGO, Chile** - The son of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet filed a defamation suit Tuesday against the general's former intelligence chief, rejecting published accusations that Pinochet became rich off the production and sale of cocaine.

Gen. Manuel Contreras was head of Pinochet's repressive police force from the 1973 coup until 1976, the period encompassing the worst human rights abuses against leftist opponents of the past dictatorship.

"There is a whole family affected, you understand, with this slander and defamation," Marco Antonio Pinochet told a Santiago court, adding that Contreras' accusation -- published in a newspaper report -- was especially distressing to his elderly parents.

Accompanied by his attorney, Luis Pacull, the younger Pinochet filed the suit in a Santiago courthouse. Pacull said Contreras' claims were especially serious given that Contreras used judicial channels to allegedly defame the family.

A local newspaper reported Sunday that Contreras claimed in a document that Pinochet's family gained extensive wealth from trafficking cocaine processed at a military facility on the outskirts of Santiago in the 1980s.

## **UNDER REVIEW BY JUDGE**

The conservative daily *La Nación* said the claim came in a 12-page document submitted to Judge Claudio Pavez, who is investigating the 1991 death of a Chilean army colonel.

Pavez said rumors about Pinochet trafficking drugs were not new. He confirmed the existence of the document and said it was being passed along to another judge for review.

The former police chief also stated in the document that former chemist Eugenio Berríos, who worked for the secret police and was found dead on a Uruguayan beach in 1995, is in reality alive and was turned over to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

"According to Manuel Contreras, the production of cocaine on army property was authorized by the highest authority [Pinochet], where Berríos worked," *La Nación* reported.

The paper cited Contreras as stating that cocaine was sent to Europe and the United States, and that the earnings went to "various accounts that the Pinochet clan maintained in the old continent and the United States."

Contreras has in the past made accusations that have puzzled Chileans, including that there were 12,000 foreign rebels in Chile at the time of the coup orchestrated by Pinochet, and that numerous disappeared political prisoners are in fact still alive.

## **IN LEGAL TROUBLE**

Pinochet, now 90, is under indictment for tax evasion amid prosecutors' investigations of multimillion-dollar bank accounts abroad.

Contreras, who completed seven years in jail in connection with the 1976 assassination in Washington of the Chilean ex-chancellor Orlando Letelier, is currently serving a 12-year prison term for the 1975 disappearance of a Chilean leftist.

In prison, Contreras could not be reached for comment on Tuesday's court action and no statements were immediately issued by him.