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FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT
LESLIE FIEGER AND GORDON ARNOLD

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

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According to the Mexican authorities, Leslie Fieger was arrested with his wife Cheryl at Mexico International Airport on November 25, 1973 when over fifteen lbs. of cocaine was found in their possession. Both were held at a detention centre during the initial investigation of the case. Mrs. Fieger was not charged. She was released on December 4 and deported to Canada. Leslie Fieger was consigned to Lecumberri prison on December 1, 1973 and charged with importation of drug into Mexico.

When they were visited by a Canadian consular officer on November 30, 1973, Mr. and Mrs. Fieger indicated that they did not wish the Canadian Embassy to be involved and Leslie did not wish their families to be informed.

Leslie and Cheryl Fieger retained the services of a Mexican lawyer unknown to the Embassy and made their own arrangements with him about the handling of the case and the fees.

Leslie's father, Mr. Al Fieger, enquired from the Department of External Affairs about his son after receiving an anonymous telephone call from Vancouver requesting \$10,000 for the defense of his son. Mrs. Fieger's parents in Calgary informed the Department that a similar telephone call was made to them making the same request for \$10,000.

On December 18, 1973, Mr. Al Fieger informed the Department that he was going to Mexico and that he would contact the Canadian Embassy. On January 7, 1974, he deposited \$2,500 with the Department on behalf of his son.

In the course of January 1974, a second Mexican lawyer informed our Embassy that he was acting on the Fiegers' behalf and

that a verdict was expected sometime in February. Mr. Al Fieger had agreed with the lawyers to deposit a further \$2,000 on his return to Canada as partial payment of legal fees. This amount was deposited with the Department on January 23, 1974.

On February 13, 1974, Mr. Al Fieger informed the Department that he had raised \$30,000 for the defense of his son and that this amount would be available the moment it would be required.

On February 14, 1974, a third Mexican lawyer, associate of the second, indicated that the case was progressing more quickly than expected and that verdict would be pronounced towards the end of February. He requested that the balance of the legal fees be deposited.

On February 19, 1974, Mr. Al Fieger deposited \$26,800 with the Department. In late February the negotiations between the Fiegers and the lawyers to whom they had spoken broke down. On April 8, 1974, the Department of External Affairs returned \$24,500 to Mr. Al Fieger who left the balance with our Embassy for his son's personal use in Mexico. The Embassy has been remitting weekly amounts on demand to Leslie Fieger against receipts. One remittance was made to Fieger's lawyer at Leslie's request. All other remittances since the arrest and imprisonment of Leslie Fieger have been made directly to him at his request. A new lawyer was retained in April by Mr. Al Fieger. The nature of the negotiations and the amount of the fee agreed upon are not known to the Department of External Affairs and no deposit has been made on this account.

Our consular officers in Mexico have visited Leslie Fieger on at least 15 occasions since November 30, 1973. While visits have been more frequent since the beginning of July 1974, they were about three weeks apart in the preceding period. At no time was Leslie

Fieger found to be or reported to be suffering from wounds or illness of any kind nor did he report or allege any such thing to anyone in the Embassy. On July 9 he gave a sworn declaration to a Canadian consular officer who had requested that he give a detailed account of the conditions in which he had been held since his arrest. This statement made no mention of torture or illness. Until the last few days, there had been no mention of torture, wounds, illness or poor living conditions in the communications Mr. Al Fieger had with officials of the Department either in Ottawa or in Mexico.

All Canadians held at Lecumberri are in a block where inmates held for drug offences are grouped. In that block which is the most modern of the establishment, Leslie Fieger has been the sole occupant for seven and a half months of a cell normally used for four prisoners. He has a private toilet and shower and he is using his personal tape recorder and over 30 cassettes of his favorite music. He has his own food prepared specially for him.

Under Mexican law, a person can be held in preventive detention up to one year before being tried and sentenced. There is no provision for bail during that period. After sentencing, prisoners may work off part of their time. One day of work earns a corresponding reduction of one day in the sentence. Les Fieger could get a fine and a prison term of 6½ years to 13 years. The case is now being considered by the Mexican judge and a verdict is expected in a week to ten days.

A second affair involving a young Canadian has also received much publicity in the last few days. It concerns Gordon Arnold whose case is substantially different from that of Leslie Fieger.

According to the Mexican authorities, Gordon was arrested on March 30, 1974 at Mexico airport after a voyage to South America in the company of a friend who recently made public some aspects of the trip. On arrival at Mexico International Airport, Gordon was found in possession of 28 grams of marijuana (about an ounce) and was charged with illegal importation of drugs into Mexico. He is being held at Lecumberri prison in the same block as Leslie Fieger.

In view of the type of drug and the small amount involved, and despite recent reports which emphasized a serious tightening and a more rigorous interpretation of Mexican drug laws, the Canadian Ambassador in Mexico has requested that Gordon's case be reviewed by the Mexican judicial authorities to determine whether the charge could be reduced from importation to simple possession. Our Ambassador has now been informed that the charge of importation will be dropped. It remains for Gordon's lawyer to secure the necessary document to obtain his release from prison.

Gordon Arnold's parents deposited \$3,150 with the Department for the assistance of their son. \$1,775 has already been remitted to Gordon at his request and against receipt on five separate occasions. A balance of \$1,375 is held at his disposal.

Gordon Arnold shares with another inmate a cell similar to that of Leslie Fieger and has arranged to have certain foods and other items and services.

The Canadian authorities are very concerned about the allegations which were made at the time of the hunger strike by American and Canadian inmates in Mexican prisons. The Canadian Ambassador in Mexico has requested an investigation into those allegations.

In particular, he has asked:

(a) for an investigation of the allegations of mistreatment of prisoners

(b) for an inquiry into the complaints that Canadian prisoners were denied access to a lawyer and to a Canadian consular officer at the time of their arrest and during their initial interrogation.