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Drug informant Barry Seal's killer dies at Angola following stay in penitentiary's hospice

Velez used machine gun in 1986 murder

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Advocate file photo by Mark H. Hunter -- Angola inmate Miguel Velez, 66, serving life for murder of drug informant Adler Barry Seal, with the larger-than-life mural he helped paint at the front of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel at the prison.

The man who made Baton Rouge headlines in the mid-1980s for the machine-gun killing of a drug informant died in the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola on Aug. 25, Louisiana Department of Corrections spokeswoman Pam Laborde confirmed Monday.

Miguel Velez, 66, had been at Angola since 1995 following his 1987 conviction in the killing of Adler Barry Seal. Velez died in the prison's hospice care, Warden Burl Cain said.

West Feliciana Parish Coroner Dr. Chaillie Daniel did not respond to requests for comment Monday about Velez's death.

According to news accounts at the time, Seal was an undercover informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration and participated in a sting that helped give law enforcement evidence that Sandinistas were participating in cocaine dealings.

"Seal was a pilot and drug smuggler for the Medellin Cartel, a Colombian cocaine enterprise," an appeal court document said in 1992. He was arrested in Florida and sentenced to 10 years in federal prison. Soon after the sentencing, he went to the DEA to ask to become an informant, and he started work in March 1984, according to appellate court documents.

The gig didn't last long.

After watching in December 1984 the documentary "Uncle Sam Wants You," produced that year, in which an investigative reporter outlined Seal's activities as a drug smuggler and federal informant, drug traffickers tied to the Medellin Cartel arranged for Seal's killing, according to appeals court documents.

Seal was expected to be a key witness in a case against Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar Gaviria among others.

On Feb. 19, 1986, as Seal parked his car in front of the Salvation Army Community Treatment Center in Baton Rouge where he was serving a six-month probation on drug related charges, Velez — along with Luis Carlos Quintero-Cruz and Bernardo Vasquez — shot him with a .45-caliber Mac 10 machine gun, according to court documents.

Quintero-Cruz, 62, and Vasquez, 61, are both being held at the David Wade Correctional Center, Laborde said. They are serving life prison sentences after being convicted of first-degree murder in Seal's death.

