

Ramírez Sánchez, son of Marxist lawyer José Altagracia Ramírez Navas and Elba María Sánchez, was born in Michelena, in the Venezuelan state of Táchira.^[14] Despite his mother's pleas to give their firstborn child a Christian first name, José called him Ilyich, after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, while two younger siblings were named "Lenin" (born 1951) and "Vladimir" (born 1958).^[15] Ilyich attended a high school in Liceo Fermin Toro of Caracas and joined the youth movement of the Venezuelan Communist Party in 1959. After attending the Third Tricontinental Conference in January 1966 with his father, Ilyich reportedly spent the summer at Camp Matanzas, a guerrilla warfare school run by the Cuban DGI near Havana.^[16] Later that year, his parents divorced.

His mother took the children to London, where she studied at Stafford House College in Kensington and the London School of Economics. In 1968, José tried to enroll Ilyich and his brother at the Sorbonne in Paris, but eventually opted for the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. According to the BBC, it was "a notorious hotbed for recruiting foreign communists to the Soviet Union" (see active measures).^{[17][18][19]} He was expelled from the university in 1970.

From Moscow Ramírez Sánchez travelled to Beirut, Lebanon, where he volunteered for the PFLP in July 1970.^[20] He was sent to a training camp for foreign volunteers of the PFLP on the outskirts of Amman, Jordan. On graduating, he studied at a finishing school, code-named H4 and staffed by Iraqi military, near the Syria-Iraq border.^[20]

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

On completing guerrilla training, Carlos (as he was now calling himself) played an active role for the PFLP in the north of Jordan during the Black September conflict of 1970, gaining a reputation as a fighter. After the organisation was pushed out of Jordan, he returned to Beirut. He was sent to be trained by Wadie Haddad.^[21] He eventually left the Middle East to attend courses at the Polytechnic of Central London (now known as the University of Westminster), and apparently continued to work for the PFLP.

In 1973, Carlos conducted a failed PFLP assassination attempt on Joseph Sieff, a Jewish businessman and vice president of the British Zionist Federation. On 30 December, Carlos called on Sieff's home on Queen's Grove in St John's Wood and ordered the maid to take him to Sieff.^[22] Finding Sieff in the bathroom, in his bath, Carlos fired one bullet at Sieff from his Tokarev 7.62mm pistol, which bounced off Sieff just between his nose and upper lip and knocked him unconscious; the gun then jammed and Carlos fled.^{[22][23][24]} The attack was announced as retaliation for Mossad's assassination in Paris of Mohamed Boudia, a PFLP leader.

Carlos admits responsibility for a failed bomb attack on the Bank Hapoalim in London and car bomb attacks on three French newspapers accused of pro-Israeli leanings. He claimed to be the grenade thrower at a Parisian restaurant in an attack that killed two and injured 30 as part of the 1974 French Embassy attack in The Hague. He later participated in two failed rocket propelled grenade attacks on El Al airplanes at Orly Airport near Paris on 13 and 17 January 1975. The second attack resulted in gunfighting with police at the airport and a seventeen-hour hostage situation involving hundreds of riot police and the French Interior Minister Michel Poniatowski. Carlos fled during the gunfight while the three other PFLP terrorists were allowed flight to Baghdad, Iraq.^{[25][26]}

According to FBI agent Robert Scherrer, one MIR and one ERP member were arrested in Paraguay in June 1975. These two would have possessed Carlos's phone number in Paris. Paraguayan authorities would then have handed over the information to France.^[27]

On 26 June 1975, Carlos's PFLP contact, Lebanon-born Michel Moukharbal, was captured and interrogated by the French domestic intelligence agency, the DST. When two unarmed agents of the DST interrogated Carlos at a Parisian house party, Moukharbal revealed Carlos's identity. Carlos then shot and killed the two agents and Moukharbal,^[28] fled the scene, and managed to escape via Brussels to Beirut.

OPEC raid in Vienna and expulsion from PFLP

From Beirut, Carlos participated in the planning for the attack on the headquarters of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) in Vienna. On 21 December 1975, he led the six-person team (which included Gabriele Kröcher-Tiedemann) that attacked the meeting of OPEC leaders; they took more than 60 hostages and killed three: an Austrian policeman, an Iraqi OPEC employee and a member of the Libyan delegation. Carlos demanded that the Austrian authorities read a communiqué about the Palestinian cause on Austrian radio and television networks every two hours. To avoid the threatened execution of a hostage every 15 minutes, the Austrian government agreed and the communiqué was broadcast as demanded.

On 22 December, the government provided the PFLP and 42 hostages an airplane and flew them to Algiers, as demanded for the hostages' release. Ex-Royal Navy pilot Neville Atkinson, at that time the personal pilot for Libya's leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, flew Carlos and a number of others, including Hans-Joachim Klein, a supporter of the imprisoned Red Army Faction and a member of the Revolutionary Cells, and Gabriele Kröcher-Tiedemann, from Algiers.^[29] Atkinson flew the DC-9 to Tripoli, where more hostages were freed, before he returned to Algiers. The last hostages were freed there and some of the terrorists were granted asylum.

In the years following the OPEC raid, Bassam Abu Sharif, another PFLP agent, and Klein claimed that Carlos had received a large sum of money for the safe release of the Arab hostages and had kept it for his personal use. Claims are that the amount was between US\$20 million and US\$50 million. The source of the money is also uncertain but, according to Klein, it was from "an Arab president". Carlos later told his lawyers that the money was paid by the Saudis on behalf of the Iranians and was "diverted en route and lost by the Revolution."

Carlos left Algeria for Libya and then Aden, where he attended a meeting of senior PFLP officials to justify his failure to execute two senior OPEC hostages – the finance minister of Iran, Jamshid Amuzgar, and the oil minister of Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Zaki Yamani. His trainer and PFLP-EO leader Wadie Haddad expelled Carlos for not shooting hostages when PFLP demands were not met, thus failing his mission.^[30]

After 1975

Manuel Contreras, Gerhard Mertins, Sergio Arredondo and an unidentified Brazilian general traveled to Tehran in 1976 to offer a collaboration to the Shah regime to kill Carlos in exchange for a large sum of money. It's not known what actually happened in the meetings.^[27]

In September 1976, Carlos was arrested, detained in Yugoslavia, and flown to Baghdad. He chose to settle in Aden, where he tried to found his own *Organization of Armed Struggle*, composed of Syrian, Lebanese and German rebels. He also connected with the Stasi, East Germany's secret police.^[31] They provided him with an office and safe houses in East Berlin, a support staff of 75, and a service car, and allowed him to carry a pistol while in public.^[31]

From here, Carlos is believed to have planned his attacks on several European targets, including the bombing of the Radio Free Europe offices in Munich in February 1981, which was part of an eventually unsuccessful hunt for Ion Mihai Pacepa ordered and financed by the Romanian government.^{[32][33]}

On 16 February 1982, two of the group—Swiss terrorist Bruno Breguet and Carlos' wife Magdalena Kopp—were arrested in Paris, in a car containing explosives. Following the arrest, a letter was sent to the French embassy in The Hague demanding their immediate release. Meanwhile, Carlos unsuccessfully lobbied the French government for their release.

In retaliation, France was struck by a wave of terrorist attacks, including: the bombing of the Paris-Toulouse TGV 'Le Capitole' train on 29 March 1982 (5 dead, 77 injured); the car-bombing of the newspaper Al-Watan al-Arabi in Paris on April 22, 1982 (1 dead, 63 injured); the bombing of the Gare Saint-Charles in Marseille on December 31, 1983 (2 dead, 33 injured), and the bombing of the Marseille-Paris TGV train (3 dead, 12 injured) on the same day.^[34] In August 1983, he also attacked the Maison de France in West Berlin, killing one man and injuring twenty-two other people.^[31] Within days of the bombings, Carlos sent letters to three separate news agencies claiming responsibility for the bombings as revenge for a French air strike against a PFLP training camp in Lebanon the previous month.

Historians' examination of Stasi files, recently accessible after German reunification, demonstrates a link between Carlos and the KGB, via the East German secret police. When Leonid Brezhnev visited West Germany in 1981, Carlos did not undertake any attacks, at the request of the KGB. Western intelligence had expected activity during this period.^[31] Carlos also had relations with the leadership of Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). Stasi asked Carlos to use his influence on ASALA to tone down the Armenian group's anti-Soviet activity.^[35]

With conditional support from the Iraqi regime and after the death of Haddad, Carlos offered the services of his group to the PFLP and other groups. His group's first attack may have been a failed rocket attack on the Superphénix French nuclear power station on 18 January 1982.

These attacks led to international pressure on Eastern European states that harboured Carlos. For over two years, he lived in Hungary, in Budapest's second district known as the quarter of nobles. His main cut-out for some of his financial resources, such as Gaddafi or George Habash, was the friend of his

sister, Dietmar Clodo, a known German terrorist and the leader of the Panther Brigade of the PFLP. Hungary expelled Carlos in late 1985, and he was refused sanctuary in Iraq, Libya and Cuba before he found limited support in Syria. He settled in Damascus with Kopp and their daughter, Elba Rosa.

The Syrian government forced Carlos to remain inactive, and he was subsequently seen as a neutralized threat. In 1990, the Iraqi government approached him for work and, in September 1991, he was expelled from Syria, which had supported the American intervention against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. After a short stay in Jordan, he was accorded protection in Sudan where he lived in Khartoum.

Arrest and imprisonment

French and US intelligence agencies offered a number of deals to the Sudanese authorities, and Sudan cooperated. In 1994, Carlos was scheduled to undergo a minor testicular operation in a hospital in Sudan.^[37] Two days after the operation, Sudanese officials told him that he needed to be moved to a villa for protection from an assassination attempt and would be given personal bodyguards. One night later, the bodyguards went into his room while he slept, tranquilized and tied him, and took him from the villa.^[38] On 14 August 1994, Sudan transferred him to French agents of the DST, who flew him to Paris for trial.

He was charged with the 1975 murders of the two Paris policemen and of Moukharbal and was sent to La Santé Prison to await trial. In 1996, a majority of the European Commission of Human Rights rejected his application related to the process of his capture.^[39]

The trial began on 12 December 1997 and ended on December 23, when he was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.^[40]

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez had a sporadic correspondence with Carlos from the latter's prison cell in France. Chávez sent a letter in which he addresses Carlos as a "distinguished compatriot".^{[41][42][43]}

In 2001, after converting to Islam,^[44] Ramírez Sánchez married his lawyer, Isabelle Coutant-Peyre, in a Muslim ceremony, although he was still married to his second wife.^[45]

In June 2003, Carlos published a collection of writings from his jail cell. The book, whose title translates as *Revolutionary Islam*, seeks to explain and defend violence in terms of class conflict. In the book, he voices support for Osama bin Laden and his attacks on the United States.

In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights heard a complaint from Ramírez Sánchez that his long years of solitary confinement constituted "inhuman and degrading treatment". In 2006 the court decided that Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) had not been violated; however, Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) had been. Ramírez Sánchez was awarded €10,000 for costs and expenses, having made no claim for compensation for damage.^[36]

In 2006, he was later moved from La Santé to Clairvaux Prison.^{[36][46]}

On 1 June 2006, Chávez referred to him as his "good friend" during a meeting of OPEC countries held in Caracas.^[47]

On 20 November 2009, Chávez publicly defended Carlos, saying that he is wrongly considered to be "a bad guy" and that he believed Carlos had been unfairly convicted. Chávez also called him "one of the great fighters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation".^[48] France summoned the Venezuelan ambassador and demanded an explanation. Chávez, however, declined to retract his comments.^[49]

New trials

In May 2007, anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguière ordered a new trial for Ramírez Sánchez on charges relating to "killings and destruction of property using explosive substances" in France in 1982 and 1983. The bombings killed eleven and injured more than 100 people.^[50] Ramírez Sánchez denied



Carlos the Jackal was incarcerated in La Santé Prison in Paris (center).



Carlos the Jackal has been incarcerated in Clairvaux Prison since 2006.^[36]

any connection to the events in his 2011 trial, staging a nine-day hunger strike to protest his imprisonment conditions.^[51] The trial began on 7 November 2011, in Paris. Three other members of Ramírez Sánchez's organization were tried *in absentia* at the same time: Johannes Weinrich, Christa Margot Fröhlich, and Ali Kamal Al-Issawi. Germany has refused to extradite Weinrich and Fröhlich, and Al-Issawi, a Palestinian, "is reportedly on the run." Ramírez Sánchez continues to deny any involvement in the attacks.^[44] On 15 December 2011, Ramírez Sánchez, Weinrich and Issawi were convicted and sentenced to life in prison; Fröhlich was acquitted.^[52] Ramírez Sánchez appealed against the verdict and a new trial began in May 2013.^[53] He lost his appeal on 26 June 2013 and judges in a special anti-terrorism court upheld his life sentence.^[54]

In October 2014, he was also charged for a Paris drugstore café attack in September 1974 that killed two and wounded 34.^[55] After a lengthy appeal of the charges, in May 2016 his trial was ordered to proceed^[56] and opened in March 2017.^[57] On 28 March 2017, he was sentenced to a further life term for this attack.^[58]

Political views

In his 2003 book, *Revolutionary Islam*, Ramírez Sánchez professed his admiration for the Iranian Revolution, writing that "Today, confronted by the threat to Civilization, there is a response: revolutionary Islam! Only men and women armed with a total faith in the founding values of truth, justice, and fraternity will be prepared to lead the combat and deliver humanity from the empire of mendacity."^[59]

Depictions and references

Books

- Aline, Countess of Romanones (née Aline Griffithi), whose first three books were memoirs of her work with the OSS, wrote the novel, *The Well Mannered Assassin* (1994), about Carlos the Jackal. The Countess knew Carlos as a charming playboy in the 1970s.
- In Tom Clancy's novel, *Rainbow Six*, terrorists attempt to have Carlos freed from prison by staging a terrorist attack on an amusement park in Spain.
- John Follain wrote *Jackal: The Secret Wars Of Carlos The Jackal* (1998), published by Orion (ISBN 978-0752826691)
- Charles Lichtman wrote the novel, *The Last Inauguration*, in which Carlos is hired by Saddam Hussein to carry out a terrorist attack on the Presidential Inauguration Ball.
- Carlos the Jackal features prominently as the antagonist in the first and third books of Robert Ludlum's fictional *Bourne Trilogy*, which depicts Carlos as the world's most dangerous assassin, a man with international contacts that allow him to strike efficiently and anonymously at locations anywhere on the globe. Jason Bourne is sent to trap Carlos.
- Spanish journalist Antonio Salas wrote his 2010 book *El Palestino* (The Palestinian), following five years of infiltration as a Palestinian-Venezuelan terrorist, during which he did extensive research on Carlos, met his family, and corresponded with him in prison.^[60]
- Colin Smith, reporter for *The Observer*, wrote the authoritative biography *Carlos: Portrait Of A Terrorist* (1976), published by Andre Deutsch (ISBN 0 233 968431).
- Billy Waugh's nonfiction book *Hunting the Jackal* (2004), reveals the CIA operation in Sudan to locate and photograph Carlos, which led to his arrest in Khartoum.
- David Yallop's book, *To the Ends of the Earth: The Hunt for the Jackal* (1993), is a detailed account of Yallop's attempts through the 1980s to unearth the true story of Carlos, as he attempts to secure an interview with him.

Films

- The Mexican film *Carlos el Terrorista* (1979), starring Dominican-Mexican actor Andrés García, is loosely inspired by Ramírez Sánchez.
- In the American spy comedy *Gotcha!* (1985), actor Nick Corri plays supporting character "Manolo", a lady's man whose favorite pick-up technique is tricking women by vaguely implying he is an international terrorist named "Carlos" and needs their help to both avoid capture and be able to move about freely, usually back to his room.
- In *The Bourne Identity* (1988), which is based on Robert Ludlum's book and stars Richard Chamberlain and Jaclyn Smith, Carlos the Jackal occurs as the movie's main villain.
- The film *Death Has a Bad Reputation* (1990), directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark and presented by Frederick Forsyth, stars Elizabeth Hurley and Tony Lo Bianco

- The film *True Lies* (1994) includes Bill Paxton as a car dealer named Simon who is trying to seduce the wife of a U.S. counterterrorism operative. The operative seeks revenge by accusing Simon of being Carlos the Jackal.
- *The Assignment* (1997), starring Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland, and Ben Kingsley, centers around a fictional CIA and Mossad mission to hunt down Carlos.
- *Munich* (2005) makes a reference to *Carlos the Jackal* in a scene recounting the acts of retaliation to Operation Wrath of God, making him accountable for some of them.
- The documentary film *Terror's Advocate* (2007) features a chapter on Carlos.
- The Danish film *Blekingegadebanden* (2009) is about a far left wing Danish organization robbing money to send to the PFLP, includes an interview with Ramírez Sánchez.
- The Olivier Assayas-directed series *Carlos* (2010) documents the life of Ramírez Sánchez. The film won the Golden Globe Award for Best Miniseries or Television Movie. Carlos is played by Venezuelan actor Édgar Ramírez, who is from the same home state as Carlos.

Music

- Carlos' face is on the cover of the Black Grape album *It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah* (1995).

Video games

- In *James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire*, one of the player's adversaries is a female assassin named Carla The Jackal. As a further allusion, the mission where Bond confronts her is called "Night of the Jackal".

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Further reading

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- *Jackal: The Complete Story of the Legendary Terrorist Carlos the Jackal* by John Follain. Arcade Publishing, 1988. ISBN 1-55970-466-7.
- *To the Ends of the Earth: The Hunt for the Jackal* by David Yallop. New York: Random House, 1993. ISBN 0-679-42559-4. This book was also published under the name *Tracking the Jackal: The Search for Carlos, the World's Most Wanted Man*.
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External links

- "Carlos the Jackal: Trail of Terror: First Strike" (https://web.archive.org/web/20041205070834/http://www.crimelibrary.com/terrorists_spies/terrorists/jackal/1.html) by Patrick Bellamy, [Crime Library](http://www.crimelibrary.com/)
- "Ex-guerrilla Carlos to sue France over solitary confinement" (<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/07/20/france.carlos.reut/>) by CNN
- "Carlos the Jackal, imprisoned for life, looks in lawsuit to protect his image" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/25/AR2010012503690.html>), *The Washington Post*, January 26, 2010
- "When Global Terrorism Went by Another Name" (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130535572>), *All Things Considered* – audio report by NPR
- "Carlos the Jackal's Parisian trail of destruction" (<http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20101104-carlos>) – article and map of Carlos' alleged activities in Paris by [Radio France Internationale](http://www.english.rfi.fr/)

- ["Carlos sentenced to life by French court" \(http://www.english.rfi.fr/france/20111216-carlos-jackal-sentenced-life-french-court\)](http://www.english.rfi.fr/france/20111216-carlos-jackal-sentenced-life-french-court) (Radio France Internationale)
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