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Like the plot of a John Le Carré spy novel, the saga of fugitive arms dealers Frank Terpil and George Gregory Korkala has taken another new twist, with the U.S. State Department checking a report that Korkala may have met with foul play in Amsterdam recently.

Terpil is a flamboyant former Central Intelligence Agency officer who has been trying — even in absentia — to help his good friend, deposed Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, return to power.

At the request of the FBI and other American law-enforcement agencies, the State Department has had The Hague checking the deaths of all

VIP

The Fugitive Vanishes & More From the Madam

thirtyish white males of any nationality in Holland in recent weeks. Friends of Korkala's, concerned about his whereabouts, have reason to believe he was traveling under false passports, one source says, most recently Canadian. The government here has been told

that Korkala may have been murdered to prevent him from returning to the United States and giving himself up. There had been reports from his family and others that indicated he may have intended to come home in mid-February and turn government witness against other international weapons merchants.

Korkala, says one source, has failed to check in recently with the one person who has always been able to contact him since he fled the country last September to avoid facing trial on charges of training terrorists, selling guns and exporting high-powered explosives.

This has added credence to the rumor of assassination, which first surfaced two weeks ago.

Korkala and Terpil, who disappeared at the same time, were codefendants. Terpil is believed to be in Libya as a "contract" worker for Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi.

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