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Search for Mengele Faulted

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Ex-Investigator Says Nazi Avoids Paraguay

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BOSTON, Feb. 9—Josef Mengele is traveling among three South American countries, but Nazi hunters searching for him in Paraguay are on the wrong track, a former U.S. Justice Department Nazi investigator said today.

"The best information is, he's on the move between Chile, Argentina and Uruguay," said John Loftus, who was a Justice Department prosecutor during the Carter administration.

Loftus discounted arguments that the Nazi doctor of Auschwitz must be dead, saying that Mengele, at 73, is younger than President Reagan. Now a private attorney in Rockland, Mass., Loftus left government work in 1981 to investigate the role of U.S. intelligence agencies in smuggling Nazis to the United States.

Mengele is not in Paraguay, Loftus said, attributing his information to a U.S. attorney investigating nationalism in South America who just returned from Paraguay.

"He [the source] is impeccable, and has ties with South American intelligence services," he said, adding that Mengele lived in Paraguay until 1979 but has been "on the move" since then and returned to Paraguay only briefly in 1982.

"All the Nazi hunters are looking in the wrong country," Loftus said.

Mengele, a doctor-turned-torturer at the Auschwitz, Poland, concentration camp who is wanted for sending 400,000 people to their deaths, was last seen in Paraguay in 1962. He slipped out of Germany at the end of the war before he could be tried for his crimes.

Loftus said he believed that Mengele escaped to Argentina using a route like that of Nazis smuggled out by British intelligence agents working closely with U.S. State Department officials. He said Mengele went from Germany to Alt Ausse, Austria, and then went to British-controlled Trieste, Italy; from there he went to Genoa and on to Argentina.