

Six prison workers killed execution-style

Officials say violence unrelated to drug boss' arrival

By *SERGIO CHAPA*
The Brownsville Herald

MATAMOROS, January 21, 2005 — The bloody, bound and blindfolded bodies of six kidnapped prison employees were found Thursday inside an abandoned SUV in a farm field outside their place of work.

Officials believe the victims — three guards and three office workers — had been kidnapped and shot execution-style before their bodies were abandoned next to the high-security federal prison CEFERESO No. 3.

The incident occurred four days after drug boss Miguel Angel Caro Quintero and bank bomber Antonio Cerezo Contreras were transferred there from another high-security federal prison outside Mexico City.

According to reports from The Associated Press, five high-profile prisoners were transferred from La Palma Federal Prison last week to break up jailhouse alliances that had been formed between imprisoned drug bosses.

Although authorities declined to comment on any connection between the two events, many onlookers said the message was clear to them.

“They (drug traffickers) want to send a message to the officials that they have control,” said one man who did not wish to be identified for fear of retaliation.

According to Notimex, the victims include Isidro del Valle Perez, Adolfo Zapata Cerda, Juan Carlos Tinajero Rivera, Marco Antonio Vargas Avalos, Francisco Zavala Orozco and Guadalupe Medrano Rodriguez.

Tamaulipas State Police said the victims were between 22 and 26 years of age.

“One of them (the guards) was in uniform,” said Cmdr. Omar Alanis Vasquez.

While watching authorities remove the bodies from a white Ford Explorer, dental technician student Lucia Ortega said she and her classmates stopped to see what had happened.

“This isn’t the first time something like this has happened,” she said of drug-related violence. “This is always a problem.”

Roberto Maldonado with the Tamaulipas attorney general’s office downplayed the connection.

“We can’t say that at this time because we’re in the beginning stages of the investigation,” he said in Spanish. “We’re not going to make any presumptions into these acts.”



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Authorities did not know how long the employees had been dead, but Maldonado said a federal investigation will be launched and an autopsy will be performed to find clues.

Two days earlier, Matamoros police said they didn't believe Caro's presence would prompt violence at the prison.

After Thursday's slayings, Maldonado said state officials are prepared to handle any further aggression.

"We work every day to fight organized crime," he said. "They do these acts and we are going to fight them one by one."

Agents from the Federal Investigations Agency (AFI) were at the scene but declined to comment.

Although Commissioner Alejandro Quintero with the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) said investigators believe the men were not killed at the scene, witnesses told The Brownsville Herald they heard shots being fired shortly after 12 p.m.

Workers at a tire shop across the street said they were inside when they heard at least two or three shots fired.

"By the time we came outside, the car was already left out there in the field," said one worker who did not want to give his name.

Inside the SUV, authorities found the blindfolded and bound bodies of the six workers.

Three of them were found slumped over each other in the backseat while the others were packed in the rear compartment of the vehicle.

According to reports from The Associated Press, federal authorities plan to increase security at the prison.

A large number of soldiers arrived at the prison shortly after 3 p.m.

Using armed vehicles, the soldiers established posts and created a roadblock into the entrance of the prison.

It was not known Thursday how long they will remain.

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