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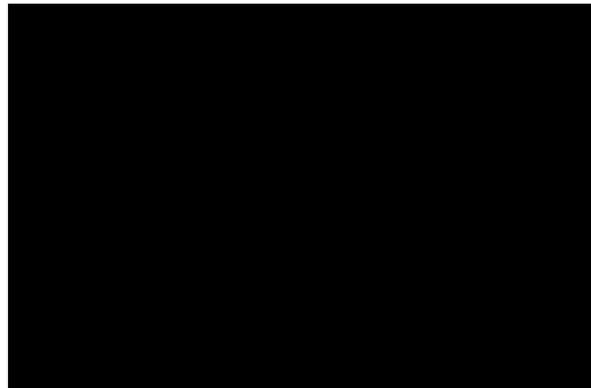
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Canadian man was beaten, says Acapulco official



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CTV.ca News Staff
Date: Thu. Jan. 11 2007 11:13 PM ET

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A city official in Acapulco, Mexico says a Canadian man who died there earlier this week was beaten on the street, directly contradicting local police reports that said he died in a hit-and-run accident.

Adam DePrisco, 19, is the third known Canadian to die while vacationing in Mexico within a year.

The incident happened on Sunday. Ramon Huerta Colorado, state prosecutor for tourism in the state of Guerrero, said an investigation showed DePrisco was struck by a car and the driver fled the scene.

Friends and family members of the dead man disputed the official story.

Marco Calabro, who travelled to Mexico with DePrisco, charges his friend died after being targeted and beaten.

Calabro says a local young woman approached DePrisco to dance at the nightclub.

"A friend of mine saw the local girl's boyfriend grab the bouncers to kick him out, and as he was getting kicked out, locals were following behind the bouncers," Calabro told CTV's Canada AM.

"I got told that he was getting kicked out, so I ran, and the last thing I saw was his body, on the floor," said Calabro.

His version of events is being supported by a city official, the Associated Press reported Thursday.

The official, who asked not to be identified for his protection, said witnesses had seen night club staff and taxi drivers beating DePrisco.

Calabro says that when he found DePrisco, it appeared that he was suffering only from head injuries.

"The signs of his body from neck down, he had no injuries. If he got hit by a car, it would have been on the highway 'cause that's the only road that leads to that club," he said.

"And we all know that it's impossible to have no injuries on your body if you get hit by a car on a highway and die with head injuries. It just makes no sense at all, from no bruise to no fractures to nothing on his body."

Calabro says local officials moved in quickly to clean up the scene.

"Right when they lifted Adam's body, they came with the water trucks and just washed away everything, washed away all the blood. They were throwing stuff off the mountain,

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and this is with my own eyes, I saw this," he said.

"And then in the newspaper, they were telling me that Mexican officials are saying that it never happened. This was seconds after they lifted up his body."

When CTV called authorities in Acapulco on Wednesday night, they insisted DePrisco had been drinking.

"The young man was found drunk and when he got out of the disco, a car hit him. And later he died in the hospital," they said.

Calabro refutes their charges, saying he and DePrisco vowed that day that they were not going to drink.

"The first two days we were drinking ...but that day we made a pact that we're not going to drink and I swear to everybody that he wasn't drinking," Calabro said.

"It's stupid that they're just trying to cover it up. And it's selfish and it's ignorant, that they just can't come forward and help us instead of defending each other all the time."

Calabro said DePrisco's family and friends are calling on the RCMP, Foreign Affairs, and the prime minister to step in and get some answers.

Calabro reportedly told DePrisco's family his hotel room was robbed while he was clinging to life in hospital.

DePrisco's cousin Luisa Pannozi told The Canadian Press there was a camera pointed at the room but that Calabro says he wasn't allowed to see the surveillance tape.

Ontario's chief coroner, Dr. Barry McLellan, told the Toronto Star he is ordering an autopsy on Adam DePrisco when his body arrives. DePrisco's body is expected to arrive in Canada on Friday.

"Because of the concerns expressed in this case we will be doing our own autopsy ... to try to enhance the understanding of what happened," McLellan told the newspaper.

It is unclear if a full autopsy was conducted in Mexico.

But Pannozi told CP relatives were able to bring back X-rays from Mexico that will be put to good use in Toronto.

Former Toronto homicide detective Mark Mendelson says the autopsy will provide definitive answers.

"You can't put a lot of stock in what the Mexican officials are doing, and it's hard to believe them, and it's hard to take their information as credible and being factual. Everything has to be reviewed by outside sources," Mendelson, who has travelled to Mexico on police business, told CTV Toronto.

Meanwhile, Toronto lawyer Edward Greenspan is urging Ottawa to pressure Mexican authorities to conduct a proper investigation. He acts for relatives of Domenic and Nancy Ianiero, also of Woodbridge, who were killed at a Cancun resort last year.

With a report from CTV Toronto's Chris Eby and files from the Associated Press

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