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Man, 29, murdered in Mexico

The shades were drawn low and tensions ran high yesterday at the Burnaby home of Masha Heikali, who was shot in an attack at the Mexican resort of Cabo San Lucas that claimed the life of her boyfriend, Bouabal Bounthavorn.

By The Vancouver Province May 20, 2008 [Be the first to post a comment](#)

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The shades were drawn low and tensions ran high yesterday at the Burnaby home of Masha Heikali, who was shot in an attack at the Mexican resort of Cabo San Lucas that claimed the life of her boyfriend, Bouabal Bounthavorn.

Two police officers emerged yesterday from the home in the 6500-block Rumble Street, in the shadow of SkyTrain, to ask media to leave the premises.

"It is their private property," said one of the officers. "They have asked for our assistance."

Heikali, 24, and Bounthavorn, 29, were staying at the Hotel Riu Palace when three gunmen appeared at their hotel room door Thursday. Bounthavorn was shot three times in the head. Heikali was shot in the foot.

Carrie Duncan, publisher of an English-language newspaper in Cabo San Lucas, said Hotel Riu workers told her "a man who appeared to be Mexican . . . burst into the room, shot him, shot the girlfriend in the foot, then fled."

Duncan, who publishes the Gringo Gazette newspaper, said police are releasing few details of the crime.

"This is a tourist town," she said. "You're not going to get very far with this."

A woman arrived at the Heikali home yesterday but quickly darted inside without speaking to reporters gathered outside. No one has been able to contact or speak with the family.

Gar Pardy, a former Canadian diplomat, said the murder has the look of a targeted hit, not an attempted robbery.

"Three shots to the head, I don't think, is a robbery interrupted," said Pardy.

Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Marie-Christine Lilkoff confirmed that Mexican police are looking into the case.

"There is an investigation -- a local investigation into the circumstances into the death," said Lilkoff. "This is all I'm in a position to say."

Bounthavorn's murder is the latest in a string of violent attacks that have left at least half a dozen Canadians dead in Mexico in the past three years.

n Domenic and Nancy Ianiero of Woodbridge, Ont., were found murdered with their throats slashed in February 2006 at a resort in the Mayan Riviera.

n In January 2007, Janette Lerch, 54, and her husband, Cliff Glasier, 67, were struck by a car in a hit-and-run while walking back to their rented condo in Ajijic, a village southeast of Guadalajara.

Glasier, a former Chatham, Ont., resident, was killed while Lerch underwent surgery to repair broken bones on the right side of her body, including her hip, shoulder and leg.

n Also in January 2007, another Woodbridge, Ont., resident, Adam DePrisco, 19, was killed outside an Acapulco nightclub. Mexican officials say he was the victim of a hit-and-run accident, while members of his family believe he was beaten to death.

n Last May, Jeff Toews, a 34-year-old Albertan, died after falling from the balcony of a Cancun resort. However, Toews' family believes he, too, was the victim of a beating.

Despite the number of violent attacks, the Department of Foreign Affairs has not issued an official warning about the country.

Currently, the department warns travellers to exercise a high degree of caution for a number of reasons, among them "high levels of criminal activity."

An estimated one million Canadians visit Mexico each year.

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