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# Judge sought as suspect in CU student's killing freed

By Howard Pankratz  
The Denver Post

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A Mexican judge who issued the release order for one of the suspects in the killing of University of Colorado student David Parrish is being sought by Mexican authorities, along with the judge's secretary.



David Parrish (Special to the Post)

At a news conference today, Puerto Vallarta prosecutor Guillermo Martin Diaz said the judge, his secretary and two jail employees are suspected of playing an active role in helping Alfonso Ramirez walk out of a Puerto Vallarta jail early Friday.

Diaz said officials want to know why the judge and his secretary issued a release order and the two jail employees let Ramirez go, all before dawn Friday.

The city's public-safety director also has been suspended without pay during the investigation.

Originally, police said Ramirez



David Parrish in Morocco in 2007.  
(Special to the Post)

switched clothing with a cellmate who was set to be released and walked out of the jail undetected. Parrish, 21, was killed Wednesday in Puerto Vallarta near a cruise-ship dock during spring break while trying to stop two men from robbing his mother, CU instructor Janet Graaff.

The suspects were identified as Ramirez and Daniel Vargas, both 30, according to Mexican authorities.

Lynn Roche, the public-affairs officer for the U.S. consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico, said the U.S. consul general in Guadalajara on Friday sent a letter to the Mexican Secretary for Public Security addressing "our concerns in the case and what had happened.

"They know of our interest that they re-apprehend the person who is no longer detained," said Roche.

Roche added that there is a representative of the U.S. consulate in Puerto Vallarta "who has been involved every minute with the case."

CU-Boulder chancellor G.P. "Bud" Peterson, said Parrish's death is a loss to the university.

"David was a geography major, a talented photographer and artist, and a student with a strong commitment to understanding other cultures and peoples — in short, everything we could hope for from a CU student," said Peterson.

Peterson said that

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young people such as Parrish are the "heart and soul of CU" and that the CU community "is diminished in incalculable ways by his loss." He described Graaff as a treasured member of the CU faculty who is a lecturer at the Leeds School of Business and the College of Engineering and Applied Science.



David Parrish at CU. (Special to the Post)

He said the thoughts and prayers of the university are with Graaff and Parrish's father, Stephen, as well as other members of David Parrish's family and his friends.

"I would ask that we all reflect upon David's life and positive contributions to our community by renewing our commitment to creating a nonviolent campus and to fostering the cross-cultural, multinational understanding that David sought for himself in his time here as a CU student," said Peterson.

"He was a very idealistic, caring young man with a great interest in the world around him," said Bronson Hilliard, spokesman for CU.

Parrish, a junior, came to CU in the fall of 2005 after graduating from Boulder High School.

Briggs Gamblin, spokesman for Boulder Valley School District, said Parrish played on the high school's tennis team and enjoyed photography.

"He was universally liked, and a lot of teachers are upset over his death," said Gamblin.

Mary Dando, director of CU's study-abroad program, said Parrish was one of about 1,200 CU students who annually study abroad. Last spring, Parrish went to Morocco. "He was in a program called the School for International Training, and in that program, he was focusing on studying culture and society," said Dando.

"His goals were to become a better global citizen. He was very well-traveled. He had traveled through Europe and South Africa, and he wanted to learn about another part of the world. And he decided he would learn about North Africa," said Dando.

According to a Puerto Vallarta police spokeswoman, a transit employee who saw the shooting attempted to help Parrish and alerted police, who apprehended the suspects.

Judith Bryan, spokeswoman for the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, described Parrish's murder "as a horrible, horrible thing."

She said U.S. officials in Mexico have expressed to Mexican authorities "a strong interest in justice being done."

"The consular agency has been supporting the family, which is what we always do in the case of American deaths overseas," said Bryan.

Bryan said the murder of Americans in Mexico is rare.

"To put this in perspective, we estimate at least a million Americans visit Puerto Vallarta every year," said Bryan. "Last year, the statistics were we had 12 cases of violence on Americans, and this is the first case of a fatal shooting that we are aware of ever in that city."

Bryan said investigations in Mexico generally are left up to local authorities unless the local Mexican police and prosecutors request assistance.

"But that is unusual," said the embassy spokeswoman.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story*

Howard Pankratz: 303-954-1939 or [hpankratz@denverpost.com](mailto:hpankratz@denverpost.com)

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