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American adventurer missing in Mexico

By **Ray Sanchez**, CNN
updated 6:52 AM EST, Mon February 10, 2014

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Harry Devert was on a motorcycle ride through Mexico

Family and friends in New York have not heard from him in two weeks

His last message mentions getting an "escort out of some area"



(CNN) -- Harry Devert's motorcycle journey from the United States to Latin America is somewhat reminiscent of "The Motorcycle Diaries," which recount the South American travels of revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara on an old motorbike in search of his insurgent spirit.

But Devert, 32, who left a job as a trader in finance to travel the world, has not been in touch with his mother or girlfriend in New York since January 25. That day he sent girlfriend Sarah Ashley Schiear an ominous text via the WhatsApp messenger app.

"Just got an hour and a half long escort out of some area it was too dangerous for me to be," the message said. "Stopping for lunch and ... voila Internet. ... Gonna get back on the road soon. Apparently there's another military escort waiting for me in some other town... I'm running way late because of the crazy military stuff...hopefully get a chance to talk to you tonight when I (hopefully) finally arrive."

He had checked out of a bed and breakfast in the southwestern Mexican state of Michoacan and planned to travel to a beach in Zihuatanejo, on the Pacific coast, that was in the final scene of the film "The Shawshank Redemption," according to friends and family.



"My son is a great communicator and he always lets me know -- because I'm anxious -- as close as he can where he's going to be or if he's going to be out of touch," his mother, Ann Devert, told CNN Saturday.

Ann Devert said she last heard from her son January 23. The phone connection was poor. He told her he'd be out of cell phone and Internet range a few days.

She said he called every January 29, his late father's birthday, "and when he didn't, I felt a misgiving but I

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thought maybe it would take a couple of days," she said. "He didn't call."

Then, Ann Devert heard from a friend who recently returned from Michoacan, where vigilante self-defense groups in numerous communities have engaged in deadly confrontations with the Knights Templar drug cartel.

After vigilantes threatened to descend on a key cartel area last month, the Mexican government sent in thousands of troops and police to try to keep the peace. The government has even [joined forces with the vigilantes](#) as the Knights Templar become further entrenched in the agricultural state.

"This is an area in Michoacan that has been very dangerous," said Ann Devert, who has been in contact with [The Missing Americans Project](#), a Website dedicated to sharing information and resources about U.S. citizens missing in other countries.

Last week, Ann Devert contacted both the American and French embassies in Mexico. Her son, born in France, has dual citizenship.

"The wheels of diplomatic work sometimes grind slowly," she lamented. "They are on top of things as much as they can be."

Schiear, 28, was less diplomatic.

"I just feeling pretty lost in terms of the help we are receiving," she said.

In a statement Saturday, a U.S. State Department spokesperson confirmed that a U.S. citizen was reported missing near Morelia, Michoacan, but declined further comment "due to privacy considerations."

"When a U.S. citizen is reported missing in Mexico, the U.S. Embassy or Consulate works with both the missing person's family and Mexican and U.S. law enforcement agencies to locate the missing individual and return him or her to safety," the statement said. "For missing person cases in Mexico, Mexican law enforcement institutions generally have jurisdiction and play the lead role in the conduct of investigations. We work closely with Mexican authorities to monitor such cases and seek progress as quickly as possible."

In Mexico, Interior Ministry officials told CNN that they have not yet confirmed that Devert is missing.

Devert's friends and family remain hopeful that his disappearance is only temporary, another story to recount from his wild travels around the world -- from Pamplona, Spain, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and beyond.

"I've been chased with a gun in Colombia, chipped my tooth on a gun that was shoved in my mouth in Venezuela and shot everything from a bazooka to a machine gun, an M16 to a Colt .45," Devert wrote in his travel blog, [A New Yorker Travels](#). "I've been in some of the poorest and some of the most dangerous parts of the world and to many of the finest, and I still can't tell which I liked more. I think that life is a pilgrimage."

In an Oct. 19 post, Devert described his latest journey on a type of vehicle he had no experience using.

"I've never ridden a motorcycle," he wrote. "Mostly, naturally, because I don't know how. So tomorrow I'm going to go to the DMV, get my motorcycle permit, buy a bike and hopefully figure out how to ride it home without crashing. Which I'm sure will be an adventure in itself."

He added, "Then in the next 2 or 3 weeks I'm going to drive it across America, through Central America, down to Brazil for the World Cup,

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and eventually south to Ushuaia, which as far as I can tell from a map is about as far south as one can get on the continent."

He purchased a green 2002 Kawasaki. Ann Devert said her son took a safety course and spent hours studying YouTube videos on how to survive falls from bikes.

Still, the fact that he had never driven a motorcycle concerned her, she said. He promised not to travel faster than 55 mph, yet he took a nasty spill while speeding in Florida, Ann Devert said. He emerged unscathed.

"He always tells me 'I take risks but I'm not an idiot,'" she said.

Devert hoped to write about his experiences traveling around Latin America, perhaps in a book.

"My son was hoping that instead of a job in an office that he'd be able to somehow use this trip to get enough followers who would maybe read a book that he would write," Ann Devert said. "He's had some extraordinary adventures. He just loves people so."

Schier said Devert spent the last year saving money for the journey.

"This trip was kind of him wanting to make it maybe a career or something," she said. "This is what he loved. He wanted to try to figure out a way to keep doing it. He started a website and everything."

Friends and family recently created the [Help Find Harry](#) page in Facebook, with more than 5,000 likes.

"He's one of those people that every single person that he comes into contact with just loved him," said Schier, who planned to meet Devert in Guatemala. "Everywhere that he's been around the world, families took him in. Everybody's hoping that's ... the end of this crazy story. Somebody has taken him in, and it'll be another one of his wild stories."

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CNN's Mary Grace Lucas in Washington, Fidel Gutierrez in Mexico and Maria Santana in New York contributed to this report.

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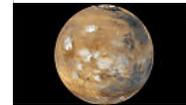


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