

Cruise Employee Found Dead In Cozumel, Mexico

Employee Of Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship Found Dead In Mexican Island Of Cozumel



(AP)

(AP) CANCUN, Mexico (AP) - A crew member of a Royal Caribbean cruise ship was found dead in the Mexican resort island of Cozumel, possibly the victim of a violent crime, authorities and company officials said Sunday.

The body of Monika Markiewicz, 32, was recovered from the ocean off the southern part of the island Saturday, said Francisco Alor, attorney general of Quintana Roo state, where Cozumel is located.

He said an autopsy determined the cause of death was drowning but added that Markiewicz also suffered a blow to the head. Police are investigating whether her death was a homicide, he said.

Royal Caribbean spokesman Cynthia Martinez said the information the company had received indicated "she was the victim of a violent crime, and did not drown accidentally." She referred questions about the case to Mexican authorities.

A Royal Caribbean statement said Markiewicz, a Polish national, debarked from the Allure of the Seas on Friday and did not return. The statement said Markiewicz worked as a musician aboard the ship.

"Tragically, we recently became aware that the crew member was a victim of a violent crime while ashore in a remote area in Cozumel," the statement said. "We extend our most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of our crew member."

There was confusion over the situation of a second person aboard the Allure of the Sea.

The attorney general said Markiewicz left the ship with an unidentified companion who was located Sunday at a Cancun hospital. Alor said authorities were trying to determine what Markiewicz and the companion were doing when the Polish woman died.

However, Martinez said the company had no knowledge of a second missing crew member or passenger.

She said a guest left the ship Friday "but it was for medical attention, which she received at a local hospital."

"She was not related to the crew member. The two incidents are not related," Martinez said.

Cozumel, one of Mexico's most popular tourist destinations, is far removed from the drug gang violence plaguing the country's northern border with the U.S. and parts of its Pacific coast. Violence is rare on the island off the Yucatan peninsula, known for its clear blue seas, scuba diving and snorkeling.

The death in Cozumel came as several cruise ship companies are canceling stops in the Mexican Pacific port of Mazatlan due to crimes against tourists.

Disney Wonder and Holland American Line have both dropped calls to Mazatlan, and other companies, including Carnival Cruise, are considering it.

Mazatlan is in the state of Sinaloa, which is the cradle of several Mexican cartels and has one of the highest homicide rates in the country.

However, Mazatlan has been much safer than the rest of the state. Port officials have described the crimes against cruise passengers as isolated and minor, including purse snatches.

Headlines about beheadings and drug cartel massacres have taken a toll on the cruise ship industry in Mexico, even in destinations far away from such violence.

Carnival's 2,500-passenger Spirit is moving from San Diego to Australia by 2012 because of economic woes and increasing fears over traveling to Mexico.
