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# NEWS

## Calgary woman Sheila Nabb emerges from coma after horrific Mexico hotel beating

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A 37-year-old Alberta woman severely beaten over the weekend at an upscale Mexican resort has emerged from her medically induced coma, according to her family.

Sheila Nabb will have facial reconstructive surgery later this week at a Mazatlan hospital, says a statement from her brother, to repair the bones in her face that were shattered.

The attack against Sheila Nabb is the latest in a growing list of Canadian injuries and deaths in the country over the last five years. Nabb's attack, and the spate of other deaths and injuries, have started to cast doubt on Mexico's safety as a place to live or visit.

Ms. Nabb was found lying unconscious in an elevator at the all-inclusive resort. When doctors brought her out of her coma, she recognized her husband and her father-in-law, and is breathing on her own through a tracheotomy.

Six Canadians were murdered in Mexico in 2011, according to Foreign Affairs Canada. Fifty were the victims of assault.

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A retired B.C. mechanic died earlier this month when he was shot by robbers in Puerto Vallarta, where he'd lived for four years. He was returning home from a concert.

UBC student Carmen Ximena Osegueda Magana, 39, and her boyfriend Alejandro Honorio Santamaria, 38, went missing on December 14 of last year. Magana was a Canadian citizen but was living in Mexico when she disappeared.

Their bodies were found on a beach in Huatulco, Oaxaca, south of Acapulco, on December 27. Both had been buried and had stab wounds in each of their necks.

In 2011, a Penticton, B.C., man was injured when he was caught in the crossfire of a gangland execution in the resort town of Mazatlan, where Nabb was also staying.

The last five years in Mexico has seen an explosion of drug-related violence across the country. Thirteen thousand people were killed by drug violence in the first nine months of 2011, bringing the overall death toll since a military crackdown to 47,000.

Although Mazatlan is an established destination for tourists in Mexico, visitors have started to avoid the region because of an ongoing drug turf wars within the state of Sinaloa. Home to several established drug cartels, it has one of the highest homicide rates in the country.

Ms. Nabb, an office manager from Calgary, was on vacation with her husband Andrew at the five-star Hotel Riu Emerald Bay in Mazatlan. It's unclear whether the attack had anything to do with the region's escalating violence. "Why, we don't know. No idea at all," said her uncle, Robert Prosser, speaking from his Kingston, N.S., home.

Despite the violence, Canadian visits to Mexico don't seem to be waning. More Canadians visited Mexico in 2010 than they did five years ago, with 1.6 million visitors heading south, compared to 800,000 in 2005.

Roughly one million Canadians visited the country in 2009.

"Obviously, there are safety concerns," said Amanda Pratt, communications and marketing manager for the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies. "In online forums, people are expressing (those concerns)."

But Mexico is still a highly popular place to visit, Pratt said, and the Mexican government has been working on improving security for locals and visitors. In Acapulco, local state police and federal police are working together, she said.

In January of last year, [the association announced they'd formed a partnership with the Mexican Tourism Board to promote travel between the two countries.](#)

It's up to individual travelers to monitor travel warnings on the Foreign Affairs website, Pratt said.

The Foreign Affairs travel report for Mexico advises travelers to "exercise a high degree of caution," except when it comes to the U.S.-Mexico border. Much of the violence in Mexico is concentrated along the American border, where the drug war runs rampant.

The American State Department estimate that more the one third of American deaths in Mexico occurred in the border cities of Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez.

Due to the high level of violence, Canadians, American and English citizens have all been advised not to travel through northern Mexico by land.

The country has also seen a sharp upturn in tourist complaints about police misconduct in recent years, as Canadian tourists allege Mexican police have raped, assaulted and stolen from them.

Rebecca Rutland, an Ontario woman who was on vacation with her fiance, alleges she was sexually assaulted by police in the resort town of Playa Del Carmen after being arrested New Year's Eve.

Other reports of theft and requests for bribes have been voiced by Canadian tourists in recent years, and police corruption in Mexico has long plagued the country.

John Babcock, a spokesman for Diane Ablonczy, minister of state of foreign affairs, said consular officials are in contact with local authorities and Ms. Nabb's family, and are providing assistance as required.

Ms. Nabb's uncle said the violence is troubling, especially considering the Calgarian was inside a secure luxury resort.

Tourists should think twice about visiting Mexico, he said.

"Stay out of Mexico. It seems to be getting worse and worse."



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