



Longtime Saltspring Island resident Robin Wood was murdered in Mexico early Tuesday morning, local police have confirmed.

Photograph by: Screen Capture, Global News

Canadian consular officials are working with local authorities on the case of the Saltspring Island man murdered in Mexico early Tuesday morning.

Robin Wood, a 67-year-old mechanic and former garage business owner, was vacationing in the seaside town of Melaque when robbers burst into his house at about 1 a.m. local time and shot Wood after he refused to hand over some goods.

Ian Trites of the Department of Foreign Affairs said consular officials in Ottawa and Canadian Consulate officials in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, were "working closely with local authorities and stand ready to provide consular assistance to the family during this difficult time."

On Tuesday, *The Province* reported that Gabriel Martinez, police spokesman in the seaside town of Melaque in Jalisco state, said two men broke into a house where Wood was staying and demanded money and his computer.

When Wood refused, he was shot once in the chest, and was pronounced dead on arrival at an area hospital, Martinez said.

The gunman and his accomplice fled on foot from the house, in the downtown area of Melaque, a small tourist town in Jalisco state popular with Mexican vacationers, five kilometres north of the popular resort area of Barra de Navidad on the Pacific coast.

The vacation home belonged to Arvid Chalmers, a realtor also from Saltspring Island, who spends winters in the town. Chalmers, a close friend of Wood's who is also in Mexico, confirmed his friend's death in an email to the Island's newspaper, the *Gulf Islands Driftwood*, Tuesday afternoon.

Residents were reeling from the news.

Local resident Erik Lundstrom, 33, said he had known Wood since he was a teenager, and had bought Wood's former business, Beddis Road Garage, from him.

"He's been a friend of mine for years," he said of Wood, who was originally from England, lived on Beddis Road on Saltspring and had several grown children from previous marriages.

"It's upsetting for everyone involved. Robin was a good guy and he had a lot of friends," said Lundstrom, who had last seen Wood on the island several months ago. "I think everyone is taking it hard."

Lundstrom said he could see how Wood made the decision to confront his assailants that cost him his life.

"He wasn't a big guy, but it makes sense to me that Robin would confront someone doing something like that. He wouldn't just turn around and walk away. He would stand up for himself."

According to the police spokesman, Wood was "in the house with a woman who lives in Puerto Vallarta" at the time of the shooting. Friends reported he had just returned from a concert in the area.

Martinez said the men had their faces covered, but spoke some English. He reported that Wood was shot in the right side of the chest after getting up and yelling, "No! No!" to his attackers.

Martinez said the police have little to go on in their search for the killers.

The people of Melaque are shocked, Martinez added, as violence of this scale is out of the ordinary for the small town of about 12,000.

However, violence in Mexico, including the murder of tourists and Canadians, is becoming increasingly common.

A Foreign Affairs travel report for Mexico, updated last month, maintains a warning that "Canadians travelling to Mexico should exercise a high degree of caution due to a deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country," specifically in the "northern border region" where the department advises against non-essential travel due to violence linked to organized crime.

"Crime is commonplace," the travel advisory continues. "Arrest and detention rates are low and contribute to high levels of criminality."

Meanwhile, Wood's friends and family, stunned by the senseless shooting, poured out their grief on social media.

A woman named Elke Gazvoda, who lives in Melaque year-round, said she had just seen Wood before he was killed.

"I met Robin last year at the Salt Spring market, and he was at a fundraiser we attended last night," she wrote. "We are still in shock. The authorities here are aware of the possible impact this will have on tourism."

"Robin was a wonderful and kind man. How sad that such a senseless crime should end his life," said Bob Sayer. "We are less without him."

"Senseless, there are no words to express my shock and sadness. RIP Robin," wrote Shelly Vermeulen.

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