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Reports: gunmen kidnap Mexican radio journalist

The Associated Press
Friday, January 1, 2010; 1:01 PM

MEXICO CITY -- Gunmen killed the chief police investigator in the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa hours after he started investigating the kidnapping of a local radio journalist, Mexican media reported Friday.

Linea Directa radio station said its reporter, Jose Luis Romero, was kidnapped by armed men in the city of Los Mochis. Hours later, gunmen killed Jesus Escalante, the chief of investigations for the Sinaloa state police, Linea Directa and El Universal newspaper reported.

Sinaloa state Attorney General Alfredo Higuera told local media the two cases could be linked. Phones rang unanswered on the New Year's Day holiday, at the attorney general's offices.

Local media described Romero, 40, as a crime reporter for Linea Directa. Reports said he was kidnapped at a restaurant by armed men who forced him into a car.

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Sinaloa, a stronghold of the drug trafficking cartel by the same name, is one of Mexico's most violent states.

Mexico is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalist says at least 17 reporters have been murdered in Mexico since 1992 in direct reprisal for their work.

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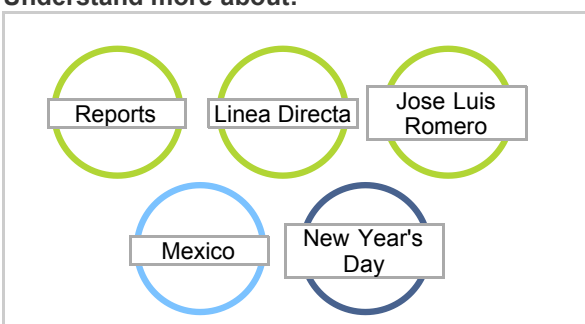
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