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Panamanian Police Arrest Suspects In Connection With Murder Of Japanese Businessperson

by Deborah Tyroler

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April 2: Police arrested Peruvian national Hector Antonio Chang Wong, accused of planning the abduction and murder of Japanese businessperson Takashi Ota. Ota, who was Chang Wong's supervisor, headed the Latin American sales division for the Citizen watch company, based in the Colon Free Zone. (See CAU 04/03/92 for previous coverage of Ota murder.) April 3: In a local televised interview, Japanese Ambassador to Panama Yoji Sujiyama praised efforts by Panamanian authorities to solve the crime. He said his government planned to donate equipment and financial resources to support the police and improve their investigative capabilities. Sujiyama added that the incident should not affect relations between Panama and Japan. April 4: Judicial Technical Police (PTJ) crime division spokesperson Ildefonso Saira said that two of Chang Wong's siblings, his wife and a servant had been arrested in connection with the murder-abduction. Later, PTJ deputy director Carlos Landero told reporters that another suspect, Stephen de Castro, had been arrested. Landero said police recovered US\$20,000 from de Castro, part of the US\$750,000 ransom paid by Citizen to the kidnappers. According to Landero, Costa Rican officials were searching for two more of Chang Wong's brothers believed to have succeeded in fleeing Panama. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 04/02/92, 04/04/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 04/03/92, 04/04/92)

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