



Cops Search Hospitals for Injured Killer of Border Patrol Agent

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CAMPO, Calif. —

At least one suspect wanted for the murder of a U.S. Border Patrol agent was probably injured significantly during the attack and may seek medical attention on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border, authorities said Friday.

Investigators are checking hospitals and medical facilities in hopes of finding whoever shot and killed Agent Robert Wimer Ramos, 30, late Thursday, said Keith Slotter, special agent in charge with the FBI's San Diego bureau.

Mexican authorities are cooperating in the investigation and search.

Ramos, a married father of two young children, was shot shortly after 9 p.m. while responding to a call near Campo, a town in rugged, arid terrain in southeastern San Diego County.

He was shot in the head and multiple times in his body and was dead when backup agents arrived, Slotter said.

Ramos was found outside his patrol vehicle, with blood evidence indicating at least one suspect and possibly more had serious injuries, perhaps by gunfire. Investigators don't yet know how many shots were fired, if Rosas fired any shots himself and how many guns were used.

"It's all possible. I can't definitively say X number of people fired or Agent Rosas got off shots or didn't. I mean, it's too early in the investigation to say that with any certainty," Slotter said.

Investigators said there were searching for at least two suspects.

There was no evidence of drugs at the scene, but investigators were not ruling out anything, including an attack by drug smugglers or human smugglers.

The incident began when Rosas, a resident of El Centro, responded to a call of an illegal entry along the border near Campo, said Richard Barlow, acting chief patrol agent for the San Diego sector.

A short time later, at least one other agent heard gunshots and attempted to contact Rosas by radio. When there was no response,

agents went to the scene and found his body near the border fence.

Rosas, a three-year Border Patrol veteran, had a 2-year-old son and an 11-month-old daughter, Barlow said.

"Everybody's digested, disgusted that a criminal can do this," Barlow said. "The violence against the agents, the violence against this country is something that should not, and will not, be tolerated."

Barlow said he could not confirm reports that Rosas called for backup and then went ahead before anyone arrived. But he said it isn't unusual for agents to work alone along the 60 miles of border in the San Diego sector.

"It is a common occurrence for our agents to start tracking individuals or start pursuing individuals that make an incursion into the United State by himself prior to backup arriving," he said.

Barlow said the area where Rosas was shot wasn't the highest priority for agents, but there had recently been areas of increased activity.

The San Diego sector of the Border Patrol has seen a 22 percent decrease in activity this year after a 7 percent increase in each of the previous two years. Still, Barlow said, agents routinely have rocks thrown at them and are physically assaulted.

The president of the union representing 17,000 Border Patrol agents declined to discuss the details of the shooting but said his organization has long been concerned about staffing levels and situations where agents work alone in the field.

Such situations are not uncommon, said T.J. Bonner, president of the National Border Patrol Council.

"It's fairly common for our agents throughout San Diego County and the rest of the country to work without a partner," Bonner said. "They each have separate vehicles, and it's a matter of concern with us."

Since 1919, 108 Border Patrol agents have died on duty, according to The Officer Down Memorial Page Inc., which tracks law-enforcement deaths. Gunfire was the leading cause with 30 deaths, followed by automobile accidents and aircraft accidents.

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