

American nun killed, bishop wounded in Nicaragua

By Ines Pinto Alicea
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Church officials said it was unclear who was responsible for the Jan. 1 attack that killed two nuns — one of them an American — and wounded an American bishop, but that they did not see it as a personal attack on the church workers.

Sister Maureen Courtney, 45, of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes of Fond du Lac, Wis., and Sister Teresa Rosales, 24, a Nicaraguan and also a Sister of St. Agnes, were killed and Wisconsin-born Auxiliary Bishop Paul Schmitz and another nun wounded after the vehicle they were

driving went over an explosive and then was fired upon from an ambush in northeast Nicaragua.

Bishop Schmitz, 46, auxiliary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bluefields, Nicaragua, was recuperating in a Managua hospital, Brother Larry LaCross of the Capuchin order from Detroit, told Catholic News Service Jan. 3. The bishop is a member of the order.

The body of Sister Courtney was to be returned to the United States Jan. 4.

Another Sister of St. Agnes, Sister Francisca Colomer, in her early 20s, suffered shrapnel wounds in the face and chest, but was reportedly in good condition in a Man-

military units in the capital until further orders.

The Atlacatl Battalion is one of several elite counterinsurgency units that received initial training in the early 1980s from U.S. military advisers in the United States as part of a plan to "professionalize" the Salvadoran armed forces.

A witness, a cleaning woman who was later taken to the United States for safety, has been quoted by Jesuit officials as saying she saw men in military uniforms leaving the murder scene.



AP-Wide World
Sister Maureen Courtney was killed Monday, Jan. 2, in an attack on church workers in eastern Nicaragua. Sister Courtney, 45, was a member of the Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac, Wis.

agua hospital, Brother LaCross said.

The attack occurred about 7 p.m. on a road near Puerto Cabezas, 200 miles northeast of Managua. The group was in a pickup truck heading to a pastoral meeting in Puerto Cabezas, Brother LaCross said.

Capuchin Father Donald O'Mahony, who works in the order's justice and peace office in Rome, told CNS that the pickup truck "struck a land mine initially, then the shooting started from the ambush." The bishop and nuns "shouted they were church workers and the shooting stopped."

The Nicaraguan government has blamed contra rebels. The government-run radio in Nicaragua called the attackers "contra forces encouraged by the invasion of U.S. troops in Panama."

A funeral liturgy was held Jan. 3 in Managua for Sister Courtney, of Milwaukee, and Sister Rosales. Their order had 21 sisters working in Nicaragua.

Sister Courtney, whom friends and family described as dedicated, outgoing and vivacious, was to celebrate her 25th anniversary as a Religious this year. She had done pastoral work, including teaching religion and sewing to the Miskito Indians, in Nicaragua for 15 years.

Jesuit

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Our people in El Salvador are pleased with the unexpected seriousness of the investigations," Father Johannes Gerhardt, spokesman at the Society of Jesus' headquarters in Rome, told the British news agency Reuters.

There was no immediate comment from the Vatican on Cristiani's statement.

Col. Rene Emilio Ponce, head of the Salvadoran armed forces high command, told journalists that the military honor commission mentioned by Cristiani had reassigned 45 soldiers and two officers of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion to other

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