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U.S. Tourist Killed in Puerto Rico After Failing to Heed No-Photo Warning During Drug Purchase

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La Perla, PR. By. GETTY IMAGES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — The burned body of a 24-year-old tourist from Delaware was identified on Tuesday, three days after he and a friend were attacked following a drug purchase in a seaside San Juan district popular with visitors, Puerto Rico police said.

Police Commissioner Antonio López Figueroa said Tariq Quadir Loat and a friend had purchased unspecified drugs in the shantytown of La Perla and were trying to take photographs after being warned not to.

Police said the two were beaten with items including an exercise weight, a piece of wood and a deep fryer on Saturday. Loat disappeared and his friend James Jackson managed to flee, but was

then hospitalized with injuries.

Police said Loat's body was found Sunday in the town of Vega Baja, about 20 miles west of San Juan, and was identified by fingerprints. The attackers have not yet been identified.

It's rare for tourists to be killed in Puerto Rico, an island of 3.3 million people that last saw a record number of killings nearly a decade ago. The last tourist to be reported killed was a 39-year-old man from Denver, Colorado, who police say was thrown from an SUV and run over in San Juan in February 2020.

La Perla was once a dangerous slum controlled by rival drug gang and considered Puerto Rico's biggest distribution point for heroin. But that reputation has largely faded, especially since it was used as the backdrop for the video of "Despacito," a song released in 2017 by Puerto Rican singers Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee.

Hundreds of tourists have since visited La Perla, where criminal activity was greatly reduced after a 2011 raid by federal agents.

Written by AP's Danica Cotto.

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