Beat: Miscellaneous

Mentally ill person eyed in murder of prominent Dutch politician

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USPA News - Former Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Els Borst, who was found dead at her house earlier this year, may have been killed by a person suffering from a mental illness, police said on Tuesday, pointing to a `confused man` who had shown up at the ex-politician`s door days before the killing. Borst, 81, was found deceased at around 6:19 p.m. local time on February 10 in the garage of her house in Bilthoven, a small village located just northeast of Utrecht, the country`s fourth-largest city.

It is believed she was killed two days earlier when she arrived home after attending a political event in Amsterdam. Police spokesman Bernhard Jens, appearing on the Dutch equivalent of BBC`s Crimewatch, said 20 detectives have been working on the case non-stop since Borst`s death in February. He said police have received more than 500 tips and have interviewed around 300 people, but a suspect or possible motive is yet to be found. Jens said investigators have spoken with most people who knew Borst, but nothing was found to indicate a motive in relation to her social circle. "We also looked at whether there was a political motive but as of yet we have not found any indications for this," the spokesman said. "We also focused on other scenarios but again and again it did not become clear to us why someone would want to kill Ms. Borst." Police now believe Borst may have been killed by a person suffering from a mental illness and investigators are especially focusing on an unidentified man who showed up at the ex-minister`s door just 1.5 week before her death. "We believe at this time that we may be dealing with a person with a mental disorder," Jens said. The incident before the murder happened at around 7 a.m. on January 29 when an unidentified man rang the doorbell at Borst`s residence. She told several people about the encounter and described the man as appearing confused, and investigators believe the same man again showed up at Borst`s door just days later. Jens said the man could be linked to the ex-politician`s murder, but also emphasized that someone else could be responsible. "We are urgently looking to get into contact with those who are involved with people who suffer from a mental disorder," the spokesman said, adding that the person responsible may have shown unusual behavior around February 8 and may have mentioned Borst`s death. In addition to the man who showed up at Borst`s front door, investigators are also trying to identify a woman who was seen walking near the ex-minister`s house on September 8 at around the time Borst is believed to have arrived back at her home. The woman was described as wearing a red coat and covered her head with a red cloth. Authorities have issued a reward of 10,000 euros ($12,670) for the tip which leads to the arrest and conviction of a suspect. Andra Neefjes-Borst, speaking publicly for the first time since her mother`s death, said the family had avoided publicity as much as possible since February but explained they are eager for answers. "We are so anxious to know why it happened. More important than who did it, `why?` Because it was a treasure of a human being and someone must have hated her so very much," Andra said. Borst served as minister of health under then-Prime Minister Wim Kok between August 1994 and July 2002, helping push through legislation that made the Netherlands the first country in the world to legalize euthanasia. She briefly led the D66 party in 1998 and was named deputy prime minister in August of that year. Borst was given the honorary title Minister of State by Queen Beatrix in December 2012, making her only the second woman to have ever received the title.

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