

Tuesday, July 21, 1992

## Suspected killer of 2 missionaries captured

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Police have arrested alleged terrorist Johnny Justino Peralta Espinoza, who is accused of murdering two Mormon missionaries in 1988.

The U.S. Embassy here congratulated the police Monday for the arrest of Peralta, who has been a fugitive since the slayings.

The embassy had offered a \$1 million reward for information leading to the capture of Peralta, who is a member of the Zarate Willka Liberation Army.

The group had claimed responsibility in the deaths of Mormon missionaries Elder Jeffrey Todd Ball, 20, of Coalville, Utah, and Elder Todd Ray Wilson, 20, of Wellington, Utah.

The two were shot to death May 24, 1989, in La Paz.

Peralta was arrested Sunday at his mother's home.

"He was very sick and thought he was dying," Marco Antonio Oviedo, sub-secretary of the interior said Monday. "He thought

this was the last chance he might have to see his mother. We've been staking her house out for years."

Ball's parents have mixed reactions to the arrest.

"What he did was not right, and yet I have not been waiting for this day and hoping for this day," said Ball's mother, Joyce.

"I hope this arrest shows them that murder is no way to solve anything," Mrs. Ball said. "Maybe it will help discourage violence

and get them to look for other ways to relieve their suffering."

Ball's father, Brent, added: "My main reason that I'm glad he's been caught is that he can't do this to anyone else."

Police accused Peralta and Susana Zapana and Victor Eduardo Prieto, who are still fugitives, of killing the two Utah missionaries, who were working in an impoverished neighborhood of La Paz.

The Mormon Church has more

than 8.1 million members worldwide.

The attack came during a 1989 strike against Bolivia's government, which was under U.S. pressure to limit peasant rights to grow coca and had stepped up eradication efforts. Coca is used to make cocaine.

Peralta's group, named for a 19th-century Bolivian Indian hero, claims to represent the country's Indian majority.

Clipped By:



jerriwilliamsauthor  
Mon, Jan 21, 2019