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Resort manager sought in probe of murder flees

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PUERTO PRINCESA CITY – The manager of the exclusive island resort of Amanpulo, who was linked to a murder coverup case filed by the Philippine National Police, has left the country for good, according to investigators working on the case.

Portuguese Miguel Guedes de Sousa, who was charged with eight others in the alleged coverup of the suspected murder of construction worker Rodolfo Abamo in January, left the country on April 12 after police filed the case at the provincial prosecutors' office.

Abamo, a steel worker employed by Excell Developers, died in the workers' barracks of Amanpulo after New Year.

Resort officials claimed they found Abamo's body already decomposing and that he had died of natural causes, a claim that was belied later by police investigators.

Murder, obstruction of justice and illegal transfer of a dead person cases were filed against De Sousa and several others.

De Sousa's departure left the provincial prosecutor at a loss.

This developed as the wife of Abamo disclosed that she was pressured by resort representatives on Saturday to issue an affidavit stating that she was no longer interested in filing a claim with the resort over the death of her husband.

"They brought me to the provincial fiscal who was in Manila and told me that I was being summoned, and it turned out it was not true. They wanted me to drop my complaint," Abamo said in Filipino.

Nancy Villaflor, an official of Seven Seas Resort Inc., which owns Amanpulo, said in an e-mail that contractor Excell and Abamo's widow had been negotiating for a settlement. This was, however, denied by the widow.

"They have not offered me anything," she said.

Sources in the tourism community in Palawan claimed that De Sousa was sacked by Amanpulo management for mishandling the incident.

The Inquirer tried to get an official statement from Amanpulo through e-mail and text messaging, but received no response.

De Sousa was suspected to be responsible for ordering the transfer of Abamo's body out of the resort without health and sanitary certification and without letting the local police conduct an investigation.

A hold-departure order was sought against De Sousa, but chief provincial prosecutor Allen Ross Rodriguez said he decided not to pursue it when company lawyers promised that De Sousa would be present in the investigation.

Amanpulo has snubbed investigators and allowed its Filipino contractors to deal with investigators, according to police sources.

Rodriguez told the Inquirer on Wednesday that pieces of evidence were still being evaluated.

The Seven Seas Resort has insisted that De Sousa and the management of Amanpulo had nothing to do with Abamo's case and was not involved in any decision on the disposition of the body.

The claim was, however, belied earlier by investigators and Cuyo mayor Teodoro Vilagracia, who said De Sousa was directly in command of all facilities on the island during Abamo's death.

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