

Van der Sloot charged with first-degree murder

LIMA, Peru — A Peruvian judge on Friday ordered Joran van der Sloot jailed on charges of first-degree murder and robbery in the killing of a 21-year-old Lima woman, determining that he acted with "ferocity and great cruelty."

Lima Superior Court Judge Juan Buendia issued the order before dawn Friday, instructing penal authorities to place the 22-year-old Dutchman in a penitentiary pending trial.

Van der Sloot remains the lone suspect in the 2005 disappearance in Aruba of Natalee Holloway, and the chief of Peru's criminal police said he told investigators that he knows the location of the U.S. teen's body.

Police say Van der Sloot smashed in the face of Lima business student Stephany Flores, whom he met playing poker at a casino, after taking her to his hotel room on May 30. They say he then strangled her, threw her to the floor and emptied her wallet.

If convicted on the murder and robbery charges, Van der Sloot would be sentenced to between 15 and 35 years in prison, court spokesman Luis Gallardo told The Associated Press.

"The aggravating factors are having acted with ferocity and great cruelty," he said.

The announcement of the charges and judge's order came in a news release issued by the court shortly before 9 a.m. Friday.

It was not immediately known to which prison Van der Sloot would be assigned or how long it might take before his trial begins.

Sheathed in a bulletproof vest, Van der Sloot was moved Thursday from criminal police headquarters

across downtown Lima to a cell at the prosecutor's office.

Flores was killed three days after meeting Van der Sloot, police say, and five years to the day after Holloway disappeared.

Lima criminal police chief Gen. Cesar Guardia told The Associated Press on Thursday night that when Van der Sloot confessed to killing the Lima business student, investigators asked him about the Holloway case and "he let slip that he knew the place where this person was buried."

Guardia said, however, that the Dutchman told investigators "he would only testify (on the matter) before Aruba authorities."

He said he didn't know how seriously to take Van der Sloot's comment given his history of dubious statements the Alabama teen's disappearance.

Van der Sloot's newly hired attorney has asked Judge Buendia to declare his client's Monday confession void on the grounds he made it in the presence of a defense lawyer appointed by police.

It was not immediately known whether the judge had ruled on that request.

Guardia said the confession was legal — that a government-appointed lawyer and an interpreter approved by the Dutch Embassy were present. He also said that Peruvian interrogators had restricted their questioning to the death of Flores, the daughter of a circus promoter and former race car driver.

The 6-foot-3 (190-centimeter-tall) Van der Sloot impressed investigators with both his intelligence and brutality, Guardia told the AP.

The general said Van der Sloot took Flores' cash, about \$300 worth of Peruvian currency, two credit cards and her national ID card. Police say he also took her car, abandoning it in a lower-class Lima neighborhood before fleeing south to Chile.

Guardia said Van der Sloot said he killed Flores because she found out about the Aruba case by using his laptop without his permission while he went out for coffee.

But he said police do not necessarily believe him and think he may have killed Flores before going out and returning to the hotel room with two cups of coffee and rolls.

Col. Miguel Canlla, chief of homicide investigations, told the AP that Van der Sloot took off his shirt after strangling Flores and put it on her. He said the Dutchman wanted to put her body into a suitcase but couldn't.

"He is cold, calculating and cynical," Canlla said.

The evidence against the Van der Sloot includes hotel security camera video showing him and Flores entering his hotel room together and the Dutchman leaving alone four hours later.

Security camera video from the Atlantic City early on the morning of her death shows Flores arriving at a poker table where Van der Sloot is sitting with other players, shaking his hand as if they met before and then taking the seat next to him. The two later leave together.

Van der Sloot was charged with extortion in the United States on June 2 — the day of his arrest in Chile — in a case that commenced after Van der Sloot contacted John Kelly, a New York lawyer for Holloway's mother, Beth Twitty, in April, according to an affidavit.

The Dutchman allegedly was seeking \$250,000 in exchange for the location of the young woman's body, how she died and the identity of those involved.

Van der Sloot's father died in February and he "wanted to come clean, but he also wanted money," said Bo Dietl, a private investigator who worked with Kelly on the case.

After consulting with Twitty, Kelly contacted the FBI.

It sent 10 to 12 agents to Aruba for a sting operation, he said, in which Kelly on May 10 gave Van der Sloot \$10,000 in cash and another \$15,000 was wired to a bank account.

Van der Sloot was told he would get \$225,000 once the body was found, Dietl said. According to the affidavit, Van der Sloot insisted that a written contract be signed between him and Twitty.

Van der Sloot was secretly videotaped by the FBI in an Aruba hotel telling Kelly he pushed Holloway down, that she hit her head on a rock and died, the affidavit says. He said he then contacted his father, who helped him bury the body.

Kelly and Van der Sloot went to where the Dutchman said he and his father had put Holloway — in the foundation of a house.

No body has been found, however.

And the affidavit says Van der Sloot admitted in a May 17 e-mail — he was in Peru by then — that he had lied about the location of Holloway's remains.

It was not the first time Van der Sloot has admitted to having lied about the case. Several times, he made confessions he later retracted.

Van der Sloot was the last person seen with Holloway before the girl vanished on the last night of a high school graduation trip.

He was arrested twice but released both times for a lack of evidence.