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EXECUTIVE DIED FROM FOUL PLAY, AUTHORITIES SAY

Brent Whiting, The Arizona Republic

A missing Del Monte executive, whose corpse was found Sunday in a rugged desert area west of Phoenix, was murdered, authorities said Monday.

The body of **Pedro Corzo**, 35, was discovered in a shallow grave not far from his four-wheel-drive Ford Explorer, said Sgt. Paul Chagolla, a spokesman for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

"There was significant body trauma indicative of foul play," Chagolla said. "We don't have a suspect or motive and are treating this as a homicide."

In the meantime, Frank Mejia, a Del Monte executive in Goodyear, criticized sheriff's deputies for what he described as less than an aggressive effort to find **Corzo**.

"The Sheriff's Office doesn't deserve any credit for this thing," Mejia said. "We had to go out and find him ourselves." Mejia said that Del Monte mobilized a search by Arizona Search Track and Rescue Inc., a non-profit volunteer group, after deputies were unable to find **Corzo's** vehicle.

Eventually, the truck was spotted about 10:30 a.m. Sunday by a pilot from the Harquahala Valley, west of Buckeye, who was assisting the group. The body was found a half-mile from the truck. Chagolla disagreed with Mejia but said he didn't want to "trade punches." He said deputies didn't find **Corzo's** body but cannot be faulted for lack of effort.

The Sheriff's Office immediately sent a helicopter to the area after **Corzo** was reported missing about 9:30 p.m. Friday, Chagolla said. Another air search was made Saturday.

Corzo, a Peoria resident, worked as general manager of the Southwest region for Del Monte Fresh Produce. His body was found about 70 miles west of Phoenix at approximately 543rd Avenue and Gas Line Road, a route he sometimes used. When on the road, **Corzo** would make frequent phone calls to co-workers and his wife,

Shelly, who is eight months' pregnant with their second child, said Ron Rockwell, a Glendale clergyman.

People became worried Friday afternoon when the calls stopped, Rockwell said. Rockwell, the pastor of Harvestime Assembly of God Church, 8340 W. Northern Ave., spoke outside of **Corzo's** home.

"**Pedro** was a blessing to everyone he knew," Rockwell said. "He'll be sorely missed."

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