

## Kidnapped ex-mayor released, police say

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TAGUM CITY, Philippines—The kidnapped former mayor of Carrascal, Surigao del Sur, was freed by his captors Thursday morning but the authorities provided little information.

Superintendent Martin Gamba, spokesperson of the Caraga police, told the Inquirer by text message that Victor Tan was freed around 10 a.m. in an undisclosed area of Lanuza town, also in Surigao del Sur.

“He was fetched by his driver and relatives,” Gamba said.

It was not clear if Tan’s family paid ransom.

Earlier, Carrascal Mayor Vicente Pimentel said Tan’s family was being asked to shell out P70 million in exchange for the victim’s release.

But Gamba said that information had not been verified.

The mayor linked the kidnapers to some politicians he did not identify.

Surigao del Sur Gov. Johnny Pimentel said Thursday that a former communist rebel, whom he identified as Jumwel Mahinay who was now a member of a government militia force, led the armed men who abducted Tan last Monday.

He claimed that Mahinay’s group as also involved in extortion rackets as well as highway robberies in Surigao del Sur.

“He is a former NPA (New People’s Army) rebel who became an SCAA (Special Citizen Armed Auxiliary) under the 36th IB (Infantry Battalion). He reportedly fled from camp, bringing along his government-issued Armalite (rifle),” Pimentel said.

SCAAs are militias trained by the military and employed by private plantations and other firms as security forces.

“Our initial investigation revealed the NPA has no hand in this incident,” Gamba said.

The 67-year old Tan was abducted by 8 to 10 armed men in civilian clothes while he was supervising a project being undertaken by a firm he manages in Barangay Zone 3 in Lanuza town around 9 a.m. Monday.

It was the second time Tan, who had served as Carrascal mayor for over a decade, was abducted. In 1997, NPA rebels also seized him as he was overseeing a construction project in Lianga, also in Surigao del Sur. The rebels freed Tan after several months. With a report from Bobby Lagsa, Inquirer Mindanao

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