

Bishop: Fire that destroyed church-run radio was deliberate

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SAN JOSE, Philippines -- A fire that destroyed Catholic radio station DZVT and the records section of the chancery's finance office in Mindoro Occidental province was arson, said the local bishop.

"It was deliberate," alleged Bishop Antonio Palang of San Jose. He told the Asian church news agency UCA News that the Oct. 26 attack was timed for when several members of the clergy were out of the province attending various events.

No injuries were reported, but Program Manager Daisy Leano estimated the damage could exceed 10 million pesos (\$230,000). The destroyed radio transmitter was built with donations from the U.S. Archdiocese of San Francisco and other foreign donors, UCA News reported.

Someone tried to set the station on fire Oct. 21, but employees were able to contain the blaze, which damaged the building housing the station's generator and part of the finance office, he said.

Police have yet to identify any suspects or motive behind the Oct. 26 attack.

Station manager Lito Vallador said the station's FM and AM services broadcast a variety of programs centered on implementing church teachings, including commentaries speaking out about social concerns.

The station claims at least a million listeners on Mindoro Island and in eight neighboring provinces.

Bishop Palang said it could take many months before broadcasting could resume.

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