

Kobe killer's letter tracked

Post office identified from barely legible postmark

Yomiuri Shimbun
KOBÉ—A letter The Kobe Shimbun received from a person claiming to be the killer of 11-year-old Jun Hase had been mailed at one of the 172 mailboxes or branches of the Kobe Chuo Post Office, police said Saturday.

Police said they identified the post office from the barely legible postmark on the envelope.

According to police, the letter was mailed between 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Hase disappeared on May 24, and his severed head was found in front of a middle school on May 27. His body was found elsewhere later that day in Suma Ward.

The Chuo Post Office's mail carriers collect mail four times a day, using six vehicles. The post office receives about 200,000 pieces of mail a day, the largest share collected between 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Since the killer wrote the postal code and address in red, the automatic postmark-stamping machine did not operate and a postal clerk reportedly stamped the postmark on the envelope manually.

The post office said it did not know who stamped the postmark on the letter.

"I think the letter probably did not draw special attention because we handle many letters with addresses written with colored pens. Also, a newspaper company gets a lot of mail," a post office official said.

Kyoto police arrive in Kobe

About 50 officers belonging to the Kyoto prefectural police arrived in Suma Ward, Kobe, on Saturday to help patrol the area where the severed head of 11-year-old Jun Hase was found on May 27.

About 400 police officers from Hyogo Prefecture have been patrolling the area 24 hours a day. However, because the area they are patrolling is so large, Hyogo police headquarters requested the extra officers.

Police hope the presence of more officers will allay the fears of local residents caused by a letter believed to have been written by the murderer that was received by The Kobe Shimbun on Wednesday.

At a ceremony to mark the arrival of

the additional officers, Hayao Kashiwagi, a senior member of the Kyoto prefectural police, said the murderer must be apprehended as soon as possible. He also promised that the police would do all they could to stop the killer from striking again.

Squarish handwriting

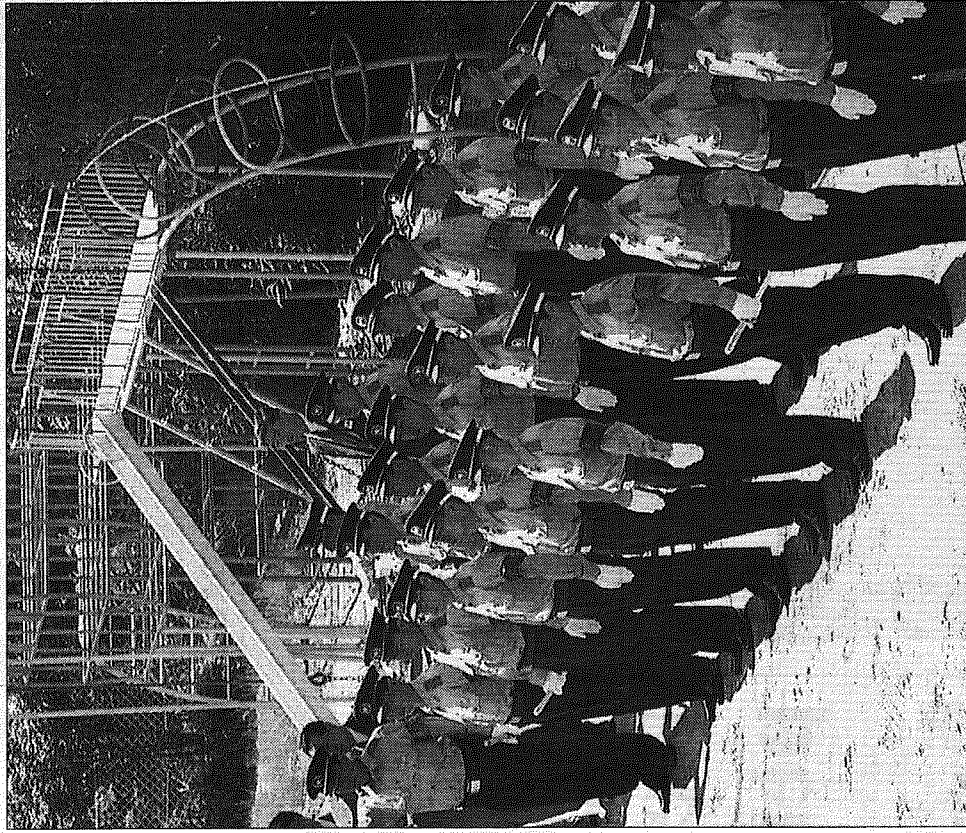
KOBÉ (Kyodo)—Kanji used in the letter believed to have been written by Jun Hase's killer are written in a peculiarly squared style, according to penmanship experts.

In the 1,400-character letter, the writer did not use curves in his kanji, even where required, leading the experts to think there is a possibility that the writer habitually uses these squared characters.

There were no traces of the writer having used a ruler to disguise his handwriting style, as had been reported, the experts said.

The letter, four handwritten sheets, was sent in a brown envelope postmarked June 3.

Police believe the letter is authentic because it contains information only the murderer could have known.



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Officers from the Kyoto prefectural police line up at a ceremony Saturday to mark their arrival in Suma Ward, Kobe.