

Pet shop pair tied to slaying, six disappearances, grilled

URAWA, Saitama Pref. (Kyodo) Police started interrogating two Saitama pet shop owners Friday who were arrested the previous day for allegedly dumping the body of one of seven of their customers who have mysteriously disappeared.

Gen Sekine, 53, and his former wife, Hiroko Kazama, 37, of Konan, Saitama Prefecture, are being questioned in connection with the suspected slaying of Akio Kawasaki, 39, a company executive of Gyoda, Saitama Prefecture, who vanished 21 months ago.

Police are also questioning a 38-year-old man, who has not been identified, in connection with the case and have obtained an arrest warrant for him.

Another six of Sekine's customers have been reported missing, including a 54-year-old Gyoda woman and a 51-year-old man from Konan, investigators said.

The couple have denied any wrongdoing, police said.

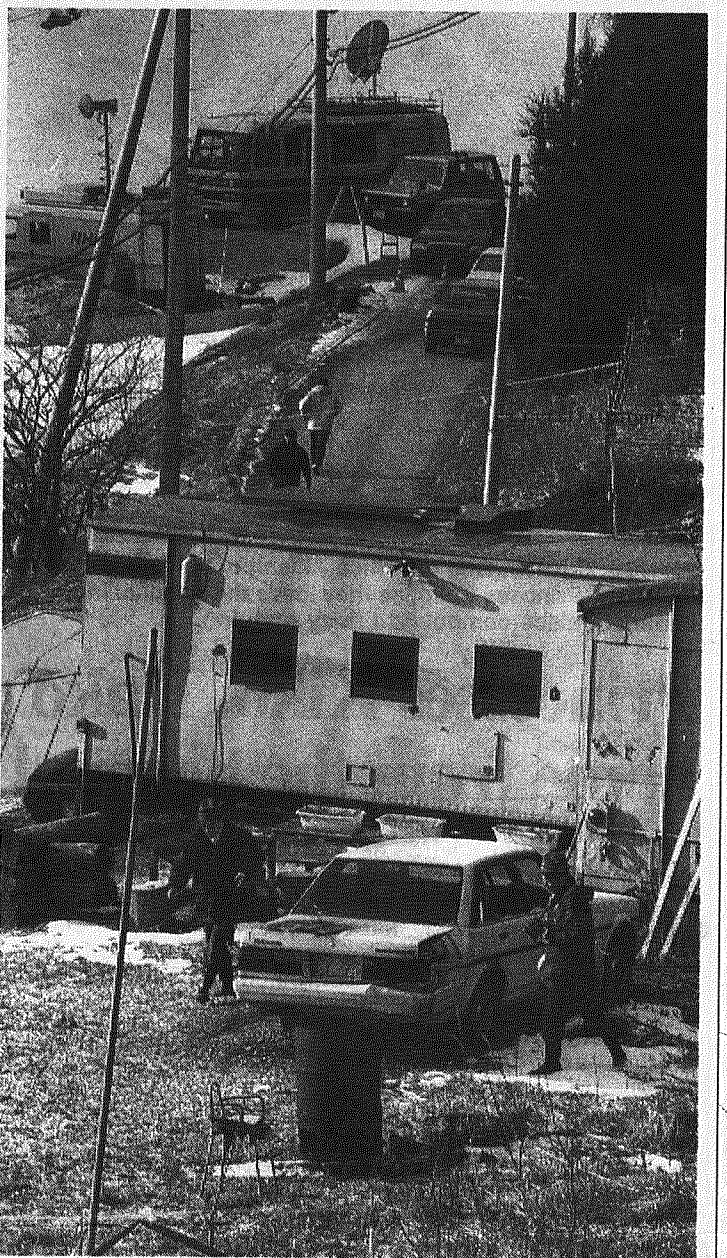
Kawasaki disappeared on the evening of April 20, 1993, after leaving his factory in Kumagaya, Saitama Prefecture, by car, police said.

They suspect Sekine and Kazama killed Kawasaki the same day and took the body by car from Kumagaya to a dog-breeding farm in Katashina, Gunma Prefecture, where they burned the corpse and dumped the remains the following day in a nearby forest. The farm belongs to Sekine's friend, police said.

Kawasaki purchased two rare dogs for about ¥11 million from the pet shop in early 1993, but there was some trouble over the deal, his family said.

The unidentified man is believed to be a close friend of Sekine who has reportedly told police he helped dump Kawasaki's remains.

Based on that confession, police searched the forest in Katashina and found bones that are believed to be Kawa-



KATASHINA, Gunma Pref. — Investigators search a dog-breeding farm here Friday that is owned by the friend of a suspected killer of a 39-year-old man from Gyoda, Saitama Prefecture. KYODO PHOTO

saki's.

The man also told police the body was cut into parts at Kawasaki's house. Police suspect the man knows the particulars about the slaying and are questioning him further.

About 160 officers began searching both Sekine's and Kazama's homes in Konan and their pet shop in Kumagaya at 8:30 a.m. Friday as

well as the Katashina forest where the remains were found.

Kawasaki's car was found at Tokyo Station's Yaesu underground parking lot on April 30, 1993. Detectives believe the suspects may have attempted to cover up the killing by making it look as if the victim had left for a remote area by train.