

## **Middlebury Police Department**

### **Media Release**

**20 March 2008**

**Subject: Missing Person Investigation – Nicholas Garza**

**The purpose of this media release is to clarify media reports that have circulated in recent days.**

---

#### Investigation

The missing person investigation is continuing. All information developed by the police department is analyzed and followed up. The tasks assigned to supplemental investigators are nearly complete. To date, no further information has been developed that would tend to ascertain the manner and cause of the disappearance of Nicholas Garza.

#### Physical Ground Search

A number of small scale searches have been conducted around the campus area since the weather-related suspension of full scale searches on February 26. Information provided by a number of people from the college community have provided the basis for an expanded ground search area. While a number of small scale “spot” searches continue to be conducted, a full scale, wide-area search is planned for March 27. The spot searches include small scale searches by the police department utilizing the department’s tracking dog and thermal imaging equipment, along with other agencies and individuals utilizing a variety of techniques.

On Tuesday, a Border Patrol helicopter from Plattsburg was used for several hours to scan areas around the campus. The planning for this operation began on the first day of the investigation, February 11. Use of aerial spotting was identified as one of the methods to be employed to search a wide-area in and around the campus.

However, due to the thick blanket of snow which had accumulated since Nicholas disappeared on February 5, these assets were deemed impractical at the time. Requests to utilize Vt Army National Guard assets, such as a helicopter using Forward Looking InfraRed (FLIR) were denied.

The Police Department subsequently made arrangements with US Border patrol to utilize their helicopter. The use of aviation assets, whatever agency could provide them, had been planned early in the investigation and was not the result of any new recommendation by any consultant. Impediments to the use of the helicopter included scheduling, logistics, and weather.

On Tuesday, March 18, the Border Patrol helicopter and crew were available and were brought to the area. Use of FLIR was determined to be impractical, due to ground level freezing and a resultant lack of any heat signature.

The aerial search was impeded, like the ground search by snow cover.

All ground searches have been unsuccessful in locating either Nicholas Garza or any evidence that may help to ascertain what happened to him.

Another ground search was conducted on Saturday, March 15, by the Lower Adirondack Search and rescue Squad utilizing air-scenting canines. A substantial area of the campus was searched, including new areas not previously searched based on information from the campus community.

All search agencies, including EquuSearch, have recommended resuming search operations when most of the snow cover is gone.

#### Case Review – Outside Experts

A private investigator from the Bara-Hutton group from New Jersey, was on-site March 7-13 to represent the Garza family. The investigator had spent 30 years with the FBI in New Jersey. Another investigator, Gary Peterson, representing EquuSearch, and acting as a liaison to the Garza family, was on site from March 13 to March 19. Both had an opportunity to review the investigation in its entirety as well as conduct an independent investigation. Neither investigator was able to provide any recommendation or substantive information in this case.

#### Assisting Agencies

A total of 29 agencies have provided staffing, logistical, and technical assistance to the Middlebury Police Department since the Department received the missing Person report on February 10.

All media releases can be obtained at [www.middleburypolice.org](http://www.middleburypolice.org) click on “news”.

Thomas Hanley  
Chief of Police