

Middlebury Police Department

Media Release

26 April 2008

SUBJECT: Missing Person Investigation – Nicholas Garza

Surface Search Activity - April 18-26

Through April 25, the Police Department, assisted by sixteen (16) organizations and over 200 search personnel, 2 rotary and 2 fixed wing aircraft and 13 canines, augmented by digital imaging, thermal imaging, and ground penetrating radar have covered an area surrounding the Middlebury College campus that is 2.5 miles north to south and 1 mile (variable + or -), east to west. An additional six (6) organizations have provided assistance in water searches in the Otter Creek from the mouth of the Middlebury River to the Weybridge Dam, a shoreline distance of about ten (10) miles.

In addition searches have covered the Routes 23, 30, and 125 corridor from Main Street, Middlebury to Weybridge Village in the north and Samson and Cider Mill Roads (Cornwall) to the west, adding several square miles to the area searched.

Since receiving notice shortly before midnight on April 17, that the Ohio organization Volunteer Image Analysis for Search and Rescue (VIASAR,) located an “object of interest” in Otter Creek, daily scans and searches of Otter Creek from the area of Middlebury Union High School to points north have been conducted.

April 18 – Vermont State Police Search and Rescue, VT Army National Guard, Middlebury Police, Middlebury Fire, and Colchester Technical Rescue conducted aerial, underwater imaging, and shoreline scans of the river. The “object”, believed to be suspended in the current under the surface, had been carried away by the current in the time between image capture (noon, April 17) and image analysis and reporting to the police (shortly before midnight, April 17). A later analysis of photos take several hours later confirmed that the “object” was in the current and had moved.

April 19- 23 – A stream/drift analysis of Otter Creek was performed to provide some insight into locating the “object”. Daily shoreline searches were conducted from the suspension footbridge south of the high school and the Pulp Mill Bridge. This included a water search by a boat and crew from Vermont Fish and Wildlife. The searches were targeting any evidence that could be relevant to the disappearance of Nicholas Garza

April 24 – Air scenting canines from Lower Adirondack Search and Rescue Team (LASAR) in New York were deployed on to scan the area of Otter Creek between the railroad trestle and Pulp Mill Bridge. An analysis of their findings is pending.

April 25 – Two search teams from the Vermont Outdoor Guide Association combed the Otter Creek from Frog Hollow in downtown Middlebury to the Weybridge dam. This included water immersion in the creek between Frog Hollow and the Belden dam in New Haven, where shoreline and currents were safe to operate in. This is a shoreline distance of nearly 7 miles.

April 25 – Police officials met with Mr. Gary Peterson, who is organizing a search on behalf of the Garza family on Saturday, the 26th. Mr. Peterson was provided all information on search areas and results to date and was provided maps and suggestions on where to conduct the Saturday search, to assist the family.

April 26 – A team from the Addison County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was deployed to search a 1.5 mile by ½ mile wide area between the Industrial Park on Exchange Street and Otter Creek, and the Belden Dam area south to the industrial areas to Elm Street, covering most of Wright Park and a section of the Trail around Middlebury.

Simultaneously, two other teams from CERT conducted shoreline and strainer searches of Otter Creek from Frog Hollow to the Belden dam in New Haven.

The searches did not locate anything relevant to the disappearance of Nicholas Garza.

Tentative arrangements have been made with Vermont State Police Search and Rescue and affiliated organizations next week to assess all data developed to date, including the results of the LASAR search and renew the river search.

In the meantime the investigation into the manner and cause of Nicholas Garza's disappearance is continuing. No new leads have been developed.

Chief Thomas Hanley