

Questions remain in teen abduction

INDEPENDENCE (AP) — Twenty-four hours after a popular 16-year-old high school student returned home after reportedly being kidnapped, the Independence police chief acknowledged Wednesday night that authorities had not ruled out the possibility that her story might have been a hoax.

Police and the FBI had said repeatedly Wednesday that they were investigating the case of Kelsey Stelling as an abduction. She was missing for more than 15 hours before she approached a home about eight blocks from her own home and said she had gotten away from her abductor.

However, puzzling questions remained Wednesday about her story. "We've been looking at this as the criminal act. We've also been looking at this, as somebody's mentioned here, as something that possibly didn't happen," Police Chief Lee Bynum told reporters during a brief, late night news conference. "We're working both ends of that at the

same time, trying to come to a point in the middle where we know what exactly happened in this situation."

In a 911 call to police early Tuesday, she said she had been kidnapped at gunpoint from the driveway of her home, forced to run to a white van in front of a lumber yard several blocks away and then forced inside.

But as of Wednesday night, authorities had released no detailed description of the suspect or any drawing of him, and they had not found the van.

Nor had they found the teenager's clamshell blue flip cell phone, which they believed had been taken from her.

Bynum said authorities continued their questioning of the teenager late Wednesday and wanted to correlate her account with statements from other Independence High School students. He also said rumors about the abduction were circulating around town, but declined to elaborate.

Colbyite unsure where they are going in Iraq

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this year. A week to one month will be spent in Kuwait to acclimate to the environment.

"We don't know where we're going to be based," Griffin said, "and the unit probably won't find out until after it arrives in Kuwait."

He hasn't been to Iraq before, but became well acquainted with the desert after his time in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

"It wasn't too bad the first time," he said. He said the climate was much like that of the deserts of the American West.

In 1991, when leaving Topeka, the temperature was 38 degrees and upon arrival in the Middle East, it was about 98 degrees.

He said when they go in August or September, it will be similar.

During Desert Storm, the unit was based in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Their assignment was maintenance, and they worked on equipment before it was shipped back to the U.S.

The unit did see some action, and had to worry about SCUD missiles.

Twenty-eight Pennsylvania National Guardsmen were killed in an attack, and they were not far from the 107th. They provided first aid and served as a location for the wounded soldiers to be evacuated by helicopter.

"It took two weeks to settle down," Griffin said. His biggest concern isn't for himself, but for the younger soldiers who will be headed into their first combat situation. Griffin said the last time, he was in their shoes but is now in more of a leadership role.

Training has changed since 1991. He said it's more intense now.

"It gets you ready for what's going on over there," Griffin said. The preparation includes live fire exercises and more.

On the home front, his family is as ready as it can be for his departure. Last year, he spent time on active duty at Fort Riley in eastern Kansas.

"They're a little hesitant about it," he said. He and his wife Kacy have five children. Four are grown, and they have a 10-year-old daughter.

"They all support each other," Griffin said. He said the Northwest Kansas Military Support Group is also a good resource for families left behind.

The last time he went, there was little time to prepare and say good-byes.

Troops had to report to their units within three days and to Fort Riley within five.

Another difference will be the new faces of people during training. Before, he knew everyone, but this time he is filling a slot in a unit that needs personnel.

"That's going to be a little different," Griffin said.

He knew his name would come up, and said it's probably only a matter of time before everyone goes.

His 20th anniversary of joining the Guard will be in November. He joined when he was 29-years-old. It was something he always wanted to do. He was self-employed when he joined, and also had an uncle in the Guard.

"I jumped on board and been there ever since," he said. "The Guard has been good to me. It's phenomenal what you can experience in the Guard. It's honorable to serve your nation and state at the same time."

Weeds concern county

From "WEEDS," Page 1

the costs to them on their tax bill.

Thomas County Noxious Weed Director Ken Ptacek wanted to know what the commissioners' plan would be to comply with the law.

After about 45 minutes talking about options, the board came to a consensus about a plan of action.

"Landowners need to take a look at their pastures and treat if necessary," Evans said. "If we receive any complaints and the landowners don't take care of it we will."

Thomas County has a cost share policy of assisting landowners with up to 25 percent of the cost of noxious weed chemicals.

Those chemicals are made available by contacting Ptacek at his office.

As in the past, landowners who have had complaints against them, will receive a letter from the county asking for treatment of the weeds. If after a specified time compliance does not begin, the county will initiate treatment and charge the landowner.

Besides musk thistle, other weeds listed in the state law include kudzu, field bindweed, Russian knapweed, hoary cress. Canada thistle, quackgrass, leafy spurge, bur ragweed, pignut, Johnson grass and sericea lespedeza.

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