

Missing aircraft found near Limber Jim Ridge

■ Plane was traveling from Washington state to Ontario

Observer staff

An aircraft that went off radar Sunday and was reported missing Tuesday was located, and the pilot was found deceased, the Union County Sheriff's Office told The Observer Wednesday.

The aircraft was found near where it went off radar close to Limber Jim Ridge southwest of La Grande, according to UCSCO Capt. Craig Ward.

Ward said the aircraft, which was traveling from Kennewick, Washington, to Ontario, "apparently got off course." Near the crash site, "the

aircraft began a rapid descent" from its altitude of 6,600 feet. Ward said Limber Jim Ridge is at an elevation of about 6,100 feet.

"Something happened," Ward said, adding that the Federal Aviation Administration will begin an investigation into what caused the crash.

As of press time, the pilot had not yet been identified.

According to the FAA preliminary accident report, the plane was a 1968 PA-32-300 fixed-wing single-engine Piper aircraft registered to David Koppen of Fruitland, Idaho.

70-mile chase ends with arrest

LAW ENFORCEMENT

By Phil Wright
EO Media Group

PENDLETON — A Portland man landed in jail Monday in Pendleton after trying to escape police across more than 70 miles of Interstate 84.



Akil

Robert Isaac Akil, 23, faces charges of unauthorized use of a vehicle, felony fleeing, reckless driving and recklessly endangering another person.

Oregon State Police Lt. Mike Turner, who oversees the agency's

post in Pendleton, tried to stop a 2014 black Dodge Charger early Monday for speeding near milepost 186 while heading east on I-84. The driver took off, according to state police, and reached speeds in excess of 100 mph.

Rather than enter into a dangerous chase, Turner followed at a safe distance and called in the car to area law enforcement.

The Charger continued to La Grande, where city police were ready at the I-84 exits at Island Avenue and Gangloff Park. Akil took the Gangloff Park exit at milepost 259, where a police

spike strip blew two of the Charger's tires.

La Grande police took Akil in to custody and soon handed him off to the state police, who brought Akil back to the Umatilla County Jail.

The district attorney's office brought the initial charges against Akil on Tuesday. According to the court documents, the state alleged Akil stole the Dodge from MLK Auto Sales, Portland. Circuit Judge Jon Lieuallen set bail Akil's at \$40,000. The case has a probable cause hearing Tuesday.



Sabrina Thompson/The Observer

Jamie Landa's role as executive director for Shelter From the Storm involves maintaining grant funding and budgeting in addition to daily business.

LANDA

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access to resources they may need — however, they cannot give legal advice. While the organization is focused on serving survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, they will provide connections to resources for

whoever comes in, for whatever they need help with.

"We don't make a judgment call," Landa said. "We don't turn anyone away for any reason."

Shelter From the Storm works within Union County by partnering with organizations like Art Center East, Community Connection

of Northeast Oregon and Eastern Oregon University. Landa said she hopes that by being connected with so many different groups, SFS can serve even more of the population.

"Everyone deserves a chance," Landa said. "Our No. 1 goal is to serve our clients."

LEE

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a suspended license. When searching Deva Williams' car, the police found a camera with photos of the Cove property, of Loretta Williams and some with Lee in the corner of the photos while at the house. A contempt of court charge for violating the restraining order is pending at this time. According to the data on the photos, Lee took pictures of the Cove home almost daily at the end of June 2018 and returned sporadically until September. According to McKaig, Loretta Williams also took photos of Lee on the property during this time, though none of those photos were shown at the hearing.

Security footage of Lee entering a building on the property July 19, 2018 was shown at the hearing, and McKaig said Loretta Williams accused Lee of tampering with a tractor.

According to McKaig, Deva Williams told police that Lee talked to him about wanting to kill his estranged wife and being able to get away with it. He said Lee became more erratic and violent in November 2018, according to McKaig. McKaig also said Deva Williams eventually refused to continue driving Lee around.

Loretta Williams had a history of mental illness, McKaig said at the hearing, but she was on new medication and had begun making plans for the future, including getting a new job and selling the house. Her friends and family said she had been getting better, according to McKaig's testimony. The divorce depositions were set for a week after Thanksgiving 2018. During this time, arguments between Williams and Lee focused primarily on assets and how they would be divided. McKaig said that Lee and Williams could not agree on selling the house, the largest asset.

On Nov. 16, Williams put up a for sale sign on the property. At the August hearing, the state argued that because the issue of the home's ownership was so contentious, the presence of the sign may have provoked Lee, providing a possible motive for him allegedly killing Williams.

When police investigated the scene of the crime in response to Williams' 911 call on Nov. 17, they found her dead in the house. The sliding glass back door was shattered, and a left hand glove was on the ground in front of the house, according to evidence presented at the hearing. McKaig said the glove had no frost on it, unlike the ground

and surrounding area. When searching Lee's trailer, investigators discovered a tag for the type of glove found outside the Cove home, McKaig said.

Evidence was presented of Lee being driven by Steve Hamilton to Ace Hardware in La Grande, where Lee purchased gloves Nov. 10, 2018. Security footage showed Hamilton's PT Cruiser, the two men walking into the store, Lee trying on gloves, testing for index finger dexterity and purchasing the gloves. McKaig said the video shows Lee's fingers imitating a trigger pulling motion. This footage, in addition to a receipt for the purchase and the tag for the gloves found in Lee's trash can at his home, gave police reason to believe the glove found in the driveway belonged to Lee, according to testimony. The addition of DNA testing from the glove by Oregon State Police further confirmed the gloves belonged to Lee.

Hamilton's PT Cruiser also became an item of interest during the investigation. McKaig, who said he had familiarity with cars, noted that the unique silhouette, the shape and placement of the headlights and the chrome door handles of Hamilton's Cruiser would make it stand out. According to his testimony, the police found security footage dated 1:12 a.m. Nov. 17 from an RV park near the Cove house that showed a car they believed to belong to Hamilton, because of the car's shape, the location of the headlights and the chrome door handle. McKaig said the investigators then ran a reenactment with a PT Cruiser of the same year, make and model. There were a few differences in the reenactment: the police's Cruiser was silver, while Hamilton's has a darker exterior; the security camera had been recently cleaned by the RV company; and there was a possible difference in speeds. The reenactment gave investigators reason to conclude that the length of the car in the security footage was consistent with a PT Cruiser, and the security footage showed a car with teardrop-shaped headlights and a chrome door handle, according to McKaig.

The Observer previously reported that Hamilton was arrested in March and charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the death of Williams. He is currently being held in Union County Jail awaiting a settlement conference that will not be open to the public scheduled for Sept. 27.

During the hearing, Lee pleaded not guilty to the murder and conspiracy to commit murder charges. A trial date has not been set. Lee remains in custody at Union County Jail.

CRASH

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California.

All three occupants of the Ford F-150 pickup were transported to Wallowa County Memorial Hospital, where one child passenger was declared deceased. The second child passenger was transported by air ambulance to a Boise hospital. Erickson was treated and released from Wallowa Memorial Hospital.

OSP was assisted at the scene by the Wallowa Fire Department, Wallowa County Emergency Medical Services, the Wallowa County Sheriff's Office, the Enterprise Police Department and the Oregon Department of Transportation.

A GoFundMe account has been set up to help the bereaved family. To access the account, go to www.gofundme.com and search for "funeral expenses godson Oregon."

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LOST

A baseball mitt was lost between 8/21 and 8/23 in La Grande. It is a Wilson mitt and has the name Brian Parker written on it. Will offer a reward of \$200 for its return. It was not expensive, but it has sentimental value. There is a phone number on the mitt, but it is no longer active. Please email brian@simplybrianp.com if found.



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