



## **RACINE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

717 Wisconsin Avenue, Racine, WI 53403-1237

(262) 886-2300 FAX (262) 637-5279

Waterford (262) 534-5166 Burlington (262) 763-9558

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Sheriff Christopher Schmaling

Chief Deputy John C. Hanrahan

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

On Saturday May 14, 2016 the Racine County Communications Center received a call of a house fire and subsequent explosion at 29235 Ketterhagen Rd. located in the Town of Burlington. Sheriff's Office deputies responded to the residence which was fully engulfed by flames upon their arrival. Initial reports indicated that the house was potentially occupied at the time of the fire; however the level of destruction and advanced stage of the fire made survivability impossible. Racine County Sheriff's investigators determined early on that the home was in fact occupied and began a preliminary investigation into the cause of the fire, and the identification of the homes occupants Kimberly Howe, Craig Lambert and Nicholas Chaulkin.

Due to the severity and scale of the fire, members of the Racine County Fire Investigation Task Force were dispatched in order to assist with the investigation.

On the evening of 5/14/16 investigators and fire staff were able to locate two deceased individuals in the residence that were unable to be identified due to their injuries. Those individuals were transferred to the Milwaukee Medical Examiners Office and subsequently identified through dental and DNA records as Nicholas J. Chaulkin M/W 5/5/99 and Craig A. Lambert M/W 1/22/75.

Based on information that the home was occupied by three individuals, investigators expanded their search efforts and utilized all available resources including cadaver dogs and air resources to help locate any additional victims. In addition to working potential leads, investigators held the scene for over a week in order to hand search the entire property for evidence. Through the course of their search investigators discovered a number of items including human remains. Those remains were immediately transferred to the Milwaukee Medical Examiners Office and the State Crime Lab where there were positively identified through DNA as the remains of Kimberly S. Howe F/W 1/31/73.

Although the exact cause of the fire is unknown, Sheriff's Office and fire investigators were able to determine that the cause of the fire involved foul play. Witness statements obtained by investigators confirmed that the home was on fire well before it exploded and reported seeing flames coming from the first floor. Additionally, evidence at the scene indicated the intentional removal of an LP gas line in the basement allowing the home to fill with gas and explode upon introduction to an ignition source.

Investigators were also able to establish that Nicholas Chaulkin did not have any smoke in his lungs at the time of autopsy indicating that he was deceased prior to the fire. Nicholas also sustained a gunshot wound to the back of the head and investigators did locate a handgun. Nicholas Chaulkin's death was ruled as a homicide by the Milwaukee County Medical Examiners Office. The injuries sustained by Lambert and Howe in the fire were so severe that the Medical Examiners Office was unable to determine the exact manner

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of death. However, autopsy results did reveal the presence of smoke in Craig Lamberts lungs which is consistent with him being alive after the fire began.

Investigators learned through the course of the investigation that Howe and Lambert were recently involved in a domestic dispute and Lambert was being kicked out of the residence. Howe and Lambert had been dating and living together for several years at the Ketterhagen address. Prior to the incident Kimberly Howe had been staying at a local hotel with her son Nicholas in order to get away from Lambert. Additionally, investigators were able to establish that just prior to the fire Kimberly Howe was on her way to the Ketterhagen address with her son Nicholas. Kimberly Howe placed a phone call to a witness indicating that she was enroute to ensure Craig Lambert was packing his belongings and leaving the residence, which was the final phone call placed by Howe concluding at 2:31 p.m. on the day of the fire. The first reports of a fire at the Ketterhagen address came into the Racine County Communications Center 45 minutes later at 3:16 p.m.

Although the exact series of events that occurred on 5/14/16 may never be known, based on the totality of information obtained throughout the investigation, the evidence suggests that Craig Lambert is responsible for the death of Nicholas Chaulkin, Kimberly Howe, and the subsequent fire and explosion.

Sheriff Christopher Schmaling would like to extend thoughts and prayers to the families of all of the victims involved in this tragic incident.

Sheriff Christopher Schmaling

By Lt. Dan Adams

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