



Fresno County Sheriff - Coroner's Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff - Coroner

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News Release

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SAR Successfully Completes Recovery of Two Bodies from a Car in the Kings River

On Thursday, October 5th, the Fresno County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (SAR) team and California Highway Patrol successfully completed a recovery operation along Highway 180 and the Kings River inside Sequoia National Park. Officers and deputies worked to extract two bodies from inside the wreckage of a car located in the river. The bodies are presumed to be that of 31 year old Yinan Wang and his 30 year old wife, Jie Song. Both are Chinese Nationals. Wang has recently been living in the San Diego area. Positive identifications of the bodies have not yet been made. Members of the Sheriff's Crime Scene Unit and Coroner's Office will make those determinations during the autopsy process.

The operation involved SAR deputies making their way out to the submerged car and attaching a cable to it from a device called a Griphoist, which is basically a manual winch system. Deputies on the side of the river tethered the Griphoist to a rock and then slowly ratcheted it, pulling it a short distance out of the water. This made conditions much safer for deputies to access the car. The team then used tools to get inside the car and were able to free both bodies. Deputies hoisted each body up to the crew aboard CHP's helicopter H40 and they flew the bodies to the road side where a coroner transportation unit was stationed.

On the morning of August 11th, a sheriff's deputy took a report from a family member who said Wang and Song were possibly missing. The relative said the couple was last seen August 6th at Crystal Caves in

Sequoia National Park. The couple had planned to drive to Fresno that night, stay in a hotel and continue on to Yosemite National Park the next day. They were scheduled to return to San Diego on August 9th. However, the relative last heard from the couple on August 6th and never received notification that they made it to any of the destinations previously mentioned. The Sheriff's Office contacted rangers with Sequoia National Park and learned they had also received a similar report on August 11th. Wang and Song were last seen driving a 2012 white Ford Focus with a California license plate of 6XMM431. The car pulled from the river on Thursday had a matching license plate and was confirmed to be the vehicle registered to Wang.

On August 8th, members of the SAR team were working in the area of Hwy. 180 near Convict Flat and Horseshoe Bend. This was in relation to a recovery operation being planned for a rental car belonging to two exchange students from Thailand. A SAR deputy, watching local news coverage about it on TV, saw a video clip in the story of a license plate, 6XMM431, lying in the brush. Knowing it did not belong to the rental car, the SAR member performed a records check on the plate to see if the vehicle had been reported missing, stolen or involved in an accident. Results showed it belonged to a 2012 Ford Focus and no police reports had been filed in relation to the car. Information about the license plate and vehicle parts found in the area was relayed to the California Highway Patrol so it could create an investigative report. After getting the missing persons report three days later, the connection between Wang, Song and the car became apparent to both agencies.

On August 12th, the Sheriff's Office and CHP both flew their helicopters above the canyon and found what appeared to be wreckage to a white car deeply submerged underwater. Due to Class 5 rapids and high water levels creating dangerous conditions, deputies were unable to access this area to examine the wreckage.

Presently, the amount of water flowing through this portion of the river is down nearly 10 times from what it was in early August. This created safer conditions for SAR to attempt a recovery operation and allowed them to succeed.

The wreckage of the Ford Focus has been left in the canyon along with the Thai students' rental car (2016 Hyundai Sonata), which still remains in

the canyon from SAR's September 1st recovery operation. CHP is now forming a plan to retrieve both cars at a later time. A specific date has not been determined. CHP will analyze the cars as part of their investigation into the cause of the wrecks.