



# **Fresno County Sheriff's Office**

Margaret Mims, Sheriff

**July 31, 2019**

**News Release**

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## **Detectives Arrest Squaw Valley Serial Killer**

Homicide detectives with the Fresno County Sheriff's Office have arrested 33 year old Buford King of Squaw Valley. Earlier today, King was in court and the Fresno County District Attorney's Office filed three counts of murder against him. His bail is set at \$3 million.

The arrest is a culmination of a three year long investigation. King meets the criteria of a serial killer, which the FBI defines as someone who murders two or more people in separate events.

King is an Army veteran who has served in Iraq. He is accused of killing 35 year old Aleksey Shelest and 62 year old Donnie Lee, both of Squaw Valley, as well as 51 year old Alberto Contreras of Visalia. King was an acquaintance of all of these men.

Alberto Contreras was last seen in January 2011 and was reported missing to the Visalia Police Department in July 2011.

Aleksey Shelest was last heard from on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 when he was in Squaw Valley. He was reported missing to the Fresno County Sheriff's Office on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Donnie Lee was last seen November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 in the area of Squaw Valley Rd. and Sand Creek Rd. in Squaw Valley. He was reported missing to the Sheriff's Office on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. Shelest and Lee's disappearances were later determined to be suspicious, so sheriff's homicide detectives took over both missing persons cases in 2016.

**On August 20, 2017, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office received a report of a man who had been shot in the foot. Deputies responded and determined Buford King was responsible for the shooting that took place in the area of Squaw Valley Road and Sand Creek Road. The two men knew each other. The victim was in the area doing construction work at the time he was shot.**

**On Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team, FSO homicide detectives, members of the Fresno Sheriff and Clovis Police Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams or EOD, went to King's home located on the 37000 block of Squaw Valley Road. The extra resources were due to detectives learning that King may be in possession of explosives. The SWAT team was able to get King to come out of his home willingly and they took him into custody. A search warrant was then executed to perform a further search of the property. Deputies found chemicals commonly used for making explosives and the bomb squads safely collected and disposed of the materials. Detectives considered King to be a person of interest in the disappearance of Lee and Shelest, so they also looked for evidence tied to that investigation, but nothing was found.**

**King was booked into the Fresno County Jail for the shooting and possessing explosive materials. On January 13, 2018, he bailed out of jail.**

**King reported to court on February 20, 2019 and the judge ordered him to be taken into custody. He has remained in jail since that day.**

**In March, detectives developed new information that pointed to Lee and Shelest being buried on King's property. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, a search warrant was served. Detectives, members of the sheriff's Crime Scene Unit and heavy equipment operators with Fresno County Public Works began to dig into the land located behind King's home to look for human remains. On the sixth straight day of digging, detectives uncovered bones believed to be those of Aleksey Shelest. Digging continued through April 4<sup>th</sup>, but no other remains were found.**

**Weeks later, detectives developed more new information. This included a more precise location where Donnie Lee might be buried. Additional information also surfaced that King may have buried the body of Alberto Contreras on some land along the 16000 block of Avenue 264 in Visalia.**

**On April 26<sup>th</sup>, detectives returned to the property in Squaw Valley with a search warrant to conduct more digging. Meanwhile, some of our other detectives joined detectives with the Visalia Police Department and Tulare County Sheriff's Office. Together, they worked with heavy equipment operators from Tulare County and the City of Visalia. They served a search warrant and began to dig on**

**the property off Avenue 264. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, crews found human remains at both the Squaw Valley and Visalia locations.**

**All of the remains were submitted to the California Department of Justice for DNA analysis. The results showed positive identifications for Alberto Contreras, Donnie Lee and Aleksey Shelest.**

**We would like to thank the following agencies and individuals for their assistance in this lengthy investigation. The Fresno County and Tulare County District Attorney's Offices, the Tulare County Sheriff's Office, Visalia Police Department, Forensic Anthropologist, Doctor Roger LaJeunesse and the Public Works Departments of Tulare County, the City of Visalia and Fresno County. A special thanks to Jason Slebin, Tim Howard, Ben Leonard, Heath Preheim and Brian Blanton. These equipment operators combined for more than 700 hours worth of digging.**

**This remains an ongoing investigation. Anyone with additional information about Buford King is asked to please contact Detective Jose Diaz at (559) 600-8204 or Crime Stoppers at (559) 498- 7867, [www.valleycrimestoppers.org](http://www.valleycrimestoppers.org) You will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.**