

Airman Arrested in Alleged Murder of Sunday School Teacher

An Air Force airman was arrested Tuesday in the death of a Mennonite woman whose body was found off a forest road in northern Arizona two months ago, authorities said.

Mark Gooch, 21, was taken into custody at Luke Air Force Base, where he is stationed in the Phoenix suburb of Glendale. He was being booked into jail in Maricopa County and eventually will be transferred to Coconino County, authorities said.

Authorities released few details about the case, citing the ongoing investigation.

Sasha Krause, 27, was last seen Jan. 18 picking up items from the Farmington Mennonite Church in northwestern New Mexico where she taught Sunday school.

"Over the last few months, San Juan County has lived in fear, not knowing if we had a predator living inside of our community or somebody that was preying upon it," San Juan County Sheriff Shane Ferrari in New Mexico said in a video message online. "I can assure you, we have our man."

It was unclear if Gooch has a lawyer.

Authorities said he traveled from Luke Air Force Base to Farmington during the time Krause went missing. They were still looking into any possible connection between the two.

"We don't know that he was going there necessarily to seek her out," said Coconino County Sheriff Lt. Brian Tozer. "We just know he was there in Farmington."

Sean and Mercy Hoyt, who started an online support page for

Krause and are friends of her family, said they are grateful for the efforts of law enforcement.

“Ultimately our prayer is for this young man to never harm anyone else but to also find forgiveness and salvation through our Lord Jesus,” said Mercy Hoyt.

Hoyt said Krause taught her own children to not be afraid of thunderstorms and how to milk a cow when Krause was a school teacher in Grandview, Texas. Krause also made time to help others, once interpreting an entire church service for a Spanish-speaking family so they would feel included, Hoyt said.

A Luke Air Force Base spokesman referred further questions about Gooch to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which did not immediately return a phone message.

Krause’s car was parked outside the Farmington church when she went missing. Authorities have said she disappeared after eating dinner with her roommates and was without her wallet, money, driver’s license or car.

San Juan County sheriff’s spokeswoman Jayme Harcrow said Tuesday that Krause was taken from the compound.

Her body was discovered Feb. 21 near Sunset Crater Volcano and Wupatki national monuments outside Flagstaff, more than 270 miles (434 kilometers) from where she last was seen. She was wearing the same clothing she had on outside the Mennonite church in Farmington.

Krause had injuries to her head that authorities believe led to her death, but they haven’t disclosed how she was killed. The Coconino County medical examiner’s office said an autopsy report isn’t available yet. {eo}

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