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Difficult Terrain Delays Progress in Mount Ord Teen Murder Investigation

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– Categories: Crime



Two months after the tragic discovery of two Arcadia High School students found shot to death at a remote campsite on Mount Ord, authorities are still searching for answers. The rugged terrain surrounding the crime scene continues to hinder efforts to identify suspects or confirm motives.

The victims, 18-year-old Pandora Kjolsrud and 17-year-old Evan Clark, were found in May at a secluded site high up on the mountain east of the Phoenix Valley. Their deaths remain under investigation by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). So far, no arrests have

been made, and investigators have not confirmed whether the shooting was targeted or random.

Crime scenes in isolated wilderness areas come with unique challenges that often delay investigations. Retired Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent Martin Hellmer explained that working in such environments complicates how evidence is located, preserved, and analyzed.

“It’s wilderness. Where does the crime scene end, and where does it begin? How far out do detectives need to go to comb that area?” Hellmer told *3TV and CBS5 (Arizona’s Family)*. “There are many logistical challenges conducting an investigation in this sort of environment. Specifically, when it comes to evidence collection, evidence preservation, and finding evidence.”

Accessing the crime scene itself is no small task. Journalists who visited the site shortly after the discovery had to navigate a narrow, twisting dirt road using four-wheel-drive vehicles to reach the mountain location. With no surveillance in the area, Hellmer emphasized that vital clues such as tire tracks, footprints, and shell casings become even more important. Yet these types of evidence can be easily missed or degraded in such difficult conditions.

“Folks need to go out to their campsite with a plan to protect themselves against the elements, against wildlife, and against other people,” Hellmer added, highlighting broader concerns about personal safety in remote locations.

Even after evidence is located, transporting it off the mountain for forensic testing presents another logistical barrier for law enforcement. Collecting and processing items becomes a slower, more painstaking process without road infrastructure or nearby facilities.

The area’s remote nature may also mean potential witnesses are limited, further complicating efforts to trace movements in and out of the campsite.

Hellmer also urged campers to prepare thoroughly before heading out to isolated sites. He advised notifying someone of their destination and expected return time, and suggested bringing devices like satellite phones or other communication tools that work in off-grid environments.