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Pregnant Marine missing from Camp Lejeune

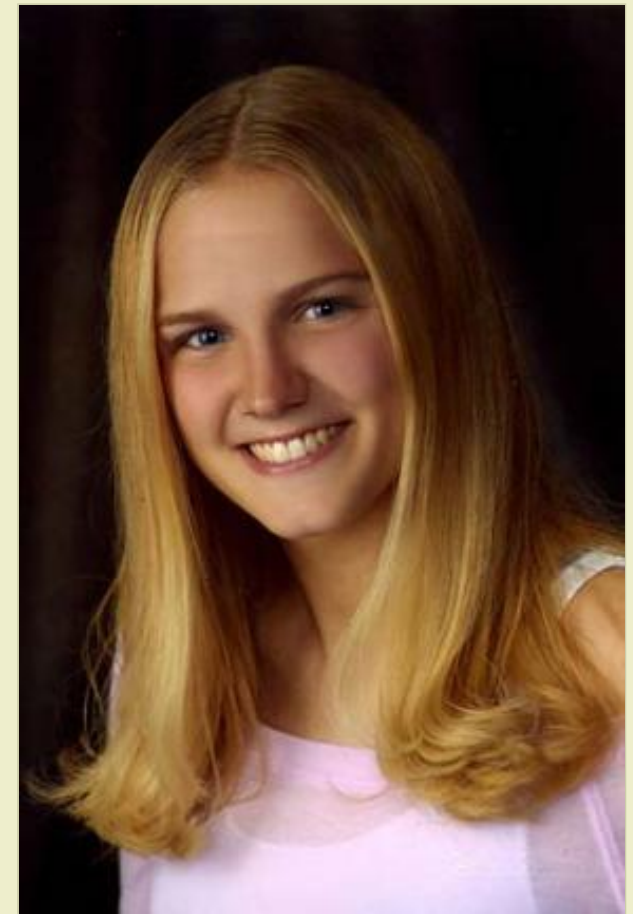
By Andrew Tilghman - Staff writer
Posted : Tuesday Jan 8, 2008 17:18:29 EST

Authorities are looking for a 20-year-old pregnant Marine who has been missing from her post at Camp Lejeune, N.C., for more than three weeks.

Lance Cpl. Maria Frances Lauterbach was a witness to an incident that occurred on base and was due to testify about it, according to sheriff's officials in Onslow County, N.C. Sheriff's and Marine Corps officials declined to provide any more details regarding the incident for which Lauterbach was scheduled to testify.

She is a native of Dayton, Ohio, and is eight months pregnant.

Lauterbach was last heard from on Dec. 14, when she spoke to her mother by telephone, sheriff's officials said. Several days later, her mother, Mary Lauterbach, of Dayton, contacted the Onslow County Sheriff's Department to file a missing persons report. The mother was "suspicious that something bad may have happened to her daughter," sheriff's officials said in a prepared statement.



Courtesy photo
Maria Frances Lauterbach, who is eight months pregnant,

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Investigators found her cell phone discarded near the main gate at Camp Lejeune on Dec. 20. No calls have been made on the phone since Dec. 14, sheriff's officials said.

Bank records show a withdrawal from her account on Dec. 14. Ten days later, on Christmas Eve, records show "suspicious activity" on her account, investigators said.

In addition, the sheriff's department's statement said: "There are several findings and pieces of evidence that have been discovered that cause law enforcement to be concerned with the circumstances surrounding Maria's disappearance."

She drives a blue Hyundai Sonata, which also remains missing.

Lauterbach joined the Marine Corps in June 2006 and has not been deployed overseas. She is currently assigned to the Group Consolidated Administration Center, Service Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 27, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force.

Marine officials at Camp Lejeune declined to provide any further information on Tuesday.

Lauterbach is 5 feet, 4 inches tall and weighs 140 pounds, with blond hair, blue eyes and a Marine Corps tattoo on her upper right arm, according to sheriff's officials.

Lauterbach's friends and family have created an online page at Facebook.com, labeled "Help us find Maria Lauterbach."

"All of us love you and we miss you," wrote her sister, Anne Lauterbach, on the page. "Please come home!!!"

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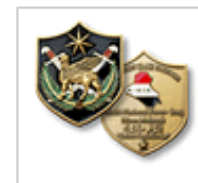
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