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News Release

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Body of homicide suspect located in Kōke'e after 8-day multiagency search

LĪHU'E – A deceased body believed to be that of 22-year-old Kody Gardner, the suspect of a homicide that occurred in Kalāheo on Feb. 16, was observed by officials in Kōke'e on Thursday, Feb. 23, after an 8-day multiagency search.

“Due to the ongoing windy, rainy, and cloudy weather conditions and remote location, we have not yet been able to recover the body,” said Kaua'i Police Department Investigative Services Bureau Assistant Chief Bryson Ponce. “The safety of our Air-1 pilot, firefighters/rescue personnel, police officers, and partnering agencies involved in the recovery attempts is priority, and we will continue our efforts in the near future during favorable weather conditions”.

“Our hearts go out to the family, loved ones, and all affected by this tragedy,” said Ponce. “We thank all our partners involved in this multiagency search and the public for your patience and support.”

Partners involved in the week-long search included members of the Kaua'i Police Department, personnel with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, Kaua'i Fire Department, Kaua'i Search and Rescue (KSAR), friends and family of the decedent, and other volunteers. Because of the remote location and nature of the search, resources also included the use of Air-1, drones, and search and rescue canines.

In the early morning of Feb. 16, an incident on Kuilei Street in Lāwaʻi resulted in a fatal injury to the suspect's father, 52-year-old Delwood Kalei Gardner of Kahili Mountain. Kody Gardner is believed to have fled the scene in a stolen vehicle, which was later located at Waimea Canyon Lookout.

An autopsy conducted on Thursday, Feb. 23, confirmed that the victim's death occurred as a result of a homicide caused by multiple penetrating sharp force injuries to the neck.

"We do not know of or have a specific motive why Kody Gardner would want to harm his father, Delwood Kalei Gardner," said Ponce. "However, according to family members, Kody Gardner suffered from mental illness".

The case remains under police investigation. Foul play is not suspected in the death of Kody Gardner. Foul play is not suspected in the death of Kody Gardner, as preliminary findings suggest a fall from height.

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