

## Object in Berkeley Marina not body

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### BEE STAFF

Modesto police Sgt. Ron Cloward confirmed at 3:20 p.m. Saturday that a mystery object in San Francisco Bay had been identified as an anchor.

He said search teams at the Berkeley Marina had concluded their work for the day in the Laci Peterson investigation. She is the 27-year-old pregnant Modestan who disappeared Christmas Eve. Searchers with sonar equipment spotted the mystery object Thursday afternoon, but did not attempt its retrieval until Saturday - partly because of stormy weather and partly because divers needed rest. Saturday, divers used a grid pattern to search the muddy bay bottom with their hands.

Divers did not retrieve the anchor, Cloward said.

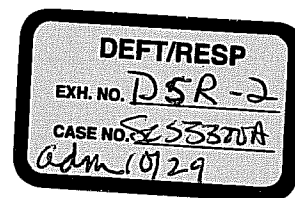
In Modesto, at the volunteer command center, people applauded and cheered upon hearing the news.

"I have to laugh," Susan Caudillo, Peterson's sister-in-law, said about the anchor. "It's a very common thing thing to have in a marina. We just knew it wasn't going to be Laci."

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<http://www.modbee.com/reports/laci/story/5858775p-6823958c.html>

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## Divers set to renew search in SF Bay

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By **TY PHILLIPS**  
and **PATRICK GIBLIN**

Divers plan to return to San Francisco Bay today to determine if an object found two days ago is a body.

Searchers with sonar equipment spotted the object Thursday afternoon while hunting for clues in the disappearance of

Laci Peterson, the 27-year-old pregnant Modestan who has been missing since Christmas Eve.

Modesto police said they put off the object's retrieval until today to give divers a rest and to let stormy weather pass.

Nevertheless, the media showed up Friday at the Berkeley Marina on the chance that divers would go after the object. But police stuck to their plan to attempt the retrieval today.

Officials said there was a 50 percent chance of the object's being a body.

The Bee reported incorrectly Friday that a body -- not Laci Peterson's -- had been pulled from the bay. Police told of the body's recovery on Thursday, then later in the day alerted The Bee that the report was incorrect, and that no body had been found. The Bee received the corrected information before press time, but the incorrect report still appeared in Friday's editions.

"Clearly, in the media frenzy that is associated with this case, there have been a number of rumors that have made it difficult to separate fact from fiction," Police Chief Roy Wasden said. "That led to a miscommunication between The Bee and the Police Department."

Peterson's husband, Scott, 30, has told police that he last saw his wife at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 24 as he left to go fishing out of the Berkeley Marina. He said his wife had planned on taking their dog for a walk in East La Loma Park.

Family members at the volunteer search center Friday clung to hope that gets more difficult to summon with each passing day.

"As a family, we don't feel that (today's) search will end up having anything to do with finding Laci," said Amy Rocha, Laci Peterson's sister.

"They're trying to clear Scott, and they're going to have to search that area to do that. We just feel that it's been so hyped that it's going to be Laci. And we don't believe that it is."

She said the family has "the same positive attitude we've always had."

"But it has gotten harder. The days go by so quickly for us that sometimes we don't realize how long it has been."

At the marina, harbor master Ann Rial Hardinger said the mystery object was found close to the end of the old Berkeley pier, which is 2 1/2 miles long. Anglers said the water depth at the end of the pier is 12 to 17 feet.

Hardinger said searchers had been using three of the harbor's boats while operating the sonar device.

One of the boats needed to be refueled, but had not been by late Friday morning.

"I'm afraid that if the boat goes out (to get fuel), there will be a rush of media because people will assume the search has continued," she said.

The boat had been refueled by the afternoon, but only after a marina employee announced to the media that the boat was not going out on the search.

Friday, no buoys or boats were used to mark the location of the object. Hardinger speculated that searchers did not want to alert the media to the exact location for fear that evidence could be disturbed.

The police tips line is 342-6166.

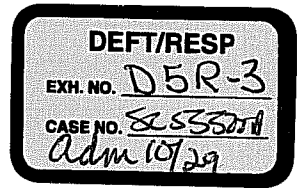
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## Object spied in bay

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By **PATRICK GIBLIN**  
and **JOHN COTÉ**

The Laci Peterson investigation turned grim Thursday as searchers found something in the San Francisco bay that police said possibly could be a body.

At 6:30 p.m., police announced that a sonar device had detected some type of object that might be another body in the area of the Berkeley Marina.

Police said divers would not attempt to retrieve the object on Friday. That expedition was planned for Saturday, when better weather is forecast and after fatigued divers have had a chance to rest.

The sonar equipment is on loan from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department.

"The guy from San Mateo said there's a 50-50 chance that it is a body," said Sgt. Ron Cloward, the Modesto officer who is in charge of the search. "The divers tried to get to it today, and they said the current was bad and the weather was bad."

Peterson, 27 and more than eight months pregnant, has been missing since Christmas Eve. Her husband, Scott, 30, reported that he last saw her at 9:30 a.m. that day as he left for a fishing trip out of the Berkeley Marina and she prepared to go for a walk with their dog.

Police extended their search to San Francisco Bay last Saturday, using specially trained dogs that can pick up scents off water. The search area stretched from the marina northwest to Brooks Island, where Peterson said he went fishing.

Cloward said officers pulled a tarp from the bay, and he said the tarp was "nothing significant." Two days later, police spokesman Doug Ridenour said searchers felt that the tarp "was suspicious enough to take and have a look at."

Ridenour added that Modesto detectives would evaluate the tarp.

Searchers returned to the marina Wednesday and Thursday after San Mateo County offered the use of its side scanner sonar device, Cloward said.

"The sonar puts a digital image on a viewing screen and allows us to see the shapes of objects," he said. "It can identify tires up to 300 feet underwater."

Authorities said they had not ruled out Scott Peterson as a suspect in his wife's disappearance, and have asked anyone who saw him in his truck or boat from Dec. 22 through Christmas Eve to call police.

**A day filled with rumors**

Officials spent part of Thursday discounting a connection between the Peterson case and a body discovered in Tuolumne County.

Sheriff's deputies there said the body turned up in the rubble of a house fire, and authorities quickly identified the victim as a 46-year-old woman who lived in the home.

At 2:30 p.m., police opened what they called their last regular press conference on the Peterson case.

"We have run out of things to tell you," Detective Ridenour said. "We don't have any significant leads that would put us in one direction or another."

Everything changed with the discovery of what might be a body in the bay. Still, police said no more press conferences would be held unless "anything is confirmed to be relating to this case."

Ridenour said police will not talk about the investigation or answer questions about Scott Peterson.

At least two search warrants have been served in the case, one at the Peterson home in the La Loma neighborhood and one at the Modesto warehouse that Scott Peterson used in his work as a fertilizer salesman.

Authorities have seized two vehicles and two computers, and an aluminum fishing boat and trailer.

Further details about the searches -- and everything that police might have been looking for -- were unavailable. The files have been sealed, Ridenour said.

Michael Tozzi, executive officer of Stanislaus County Superior Court, said Thursday that police had not yet filed documents on what the searches might have uncovered.

"Because it's a pending investigation, the court will not verify any information until such time as that information becomes public record," Tozzi said.

Officials with the district attorney's office declined to comment.

"We don't have any comment on this case because it isn't our case to comment on," Assistant District Attorney Carol Shipley said.

In other developments:

Police said they concluded their search of Tulloch Lake and found nothing.

Twelve Modesto officers participated in Thursday's search efforts, and two of those officers were in Berkeley. Some 20 officers from other agencies assisted in the marina search.

As of Thursday afternoon, the Police Department had received 2,610 tips in the Peterson case, with about 300 of them worthy of follow-up, Ridenour said. Approximately 300 tips have come from psychics, about 400 have involved kidnap theories and more than 600 have come from anonymous sources, he said.

The police tips line is 342-6166.

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