

# Suspect connected to missing New Bedford girl killed in Florida; search for teen continues

A 37-year-old Florida man wanted in connection with the recent disappearance of an 18-year-old Mashpee girl, last seen getting into his vehicle in New Bedford, died in Crestview, Florida last Thursday morning while US Marshall's were attempting to take him into custody.

New Bedford Police, working in conjunction with Massachusetts State Police detectives assigned to the Bristol County District Attorney's office, have been investigating the disappearance of Jalajhia Finklea since shortly after she went missing on October 20th.

Ms. Finklea was last seen in New Bedford getting into the Luis Zaragoza's vehicle, which investigators learned he recently rented from Logan Airport in Boston. Zaragoza is also known to go by the alias, Luis Barbosa.

As a result of the ongoing investigation into this matter, police learned Ms. Finklea's cell phone was last used to call the suspect shortly before she got into his vehicle. Further investigation determined that the Zaragoza turned off his own cell phone minutes after Ms. Finklea got into his rented vehicle.

During the course of the investigation, police were able to locate Ms. Finklea's discarded cell phone on Route 140 in New Bedford, approximately five miles away from where she first entered into the suspect's vehicle.

Police have been actively attempting to locate her and the

suspect ever since. As a result of those efforts, police determined the suspect had left the state and travelled south along the eastern seaboard to Florida. The suspect then travelled to Texas before driving back to Florida. Police have been able to locate surveillance footage from some of the places the suspect travelled to during the course of the last two weeks, but none of the surveillance shows Ms. Finklea.

As police here in Massachusetts began to obtain more information about the suspect and his travels, the US Marshal's were contacted to assist in the attempt to locate him and Ms. Finklea.

The US Marshal's were able to successfully locate the suspect last Wednesday night and began surveilling him. As the search for Ms. Finklea continued, police here in Massachusetts sought and obtained an arrest warrant for the suspect, charging him with kidnapping and larceny of a motor vehicle.

New Bedford Police detectives were en route to Florida Thursday morning as the US Marshal's and an assisting Okaloosa County Sheriff's deputy attempted to arrest the suspect at a McDonald's parking lot in Crestview, Florida. The suspect, who was armed with a handgun, died during a confrontation with police.

The investigation into the shooting is being conducted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. All requests for information regarding that incident should be made to officials in Florida.

Investigators have yet to locate Ms. Finklea and the search for her continues at this hour. New Bedford Police and State Police detectives assigned to this office have been working tirelessly to locate Ms. Finklea and will continue to do so. If you have any information regarding this case, please contact the New Bedford Police Department Station 3 at 508-991-6360