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UPDATE: Authorities release Helendale woman

BAKERSFIELD — A Helendale woman who was arrested this week in connection with her husband's Aug. 17 killing was not charged with a crime Thursday by the Kern County District Attorney's office due to insufficient evidence, Deputy DA Esther Schlaerth said.

Sabrina Limon, 35, was scheduled to be arraigned on three felony charges, including murder, stemming from her Tuesday arrest by Kern County Sheriff's Department detectives. Also arrested Tuesday was Redlands firefighter Jonathan Michael Hearn, 24, of Hesperia. Sheriff's officials had said they believed the pair were having an affair.

Hearn is accused of fatally shooting Limon's husband, Robert Limon, as he ended a work shift on Aug. 19 at a Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway industrial complex at 1528 Goodrick Drive in Tehachapi. Limon, 38, had been last seen by coworkers after leaving fieldwork about 5 p.m.

Hearn, a city of Redlands firefighter who graduated from the Victor Valley College Firefighter I Academy, pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder with special circumstances and conspiracy charges in a Bakersfield courtroom Thursday. He wore paper clothing in his first court appearance, an indication he is on suicide watch. The District Attorney's office has not yet decided whether it will seek the death penalty in his case. The murder charge has been filed with enhancements of lying in wait and using a firearm.

Hearn is due back in court Dec. 5, court records show.

Kern County Sheriff's Department officials said they believed they presented the DA with a good case against Sabrina Limon. Detectives said they looked into hundreds of leads and developed information Sabrina Limon and Hearn were in a relationship before the shooting.

"We believe we developed probable cause to believe that Sabrina Limon was responsible for her husband's death and she had conspired with Hearn in the murder," KCSO spokesman Ray Pruitt said. "That's what led to her arrest two days ago."

Pruitt declined to comment on the DA's decision to not file charges against Sabrina Limon. Limon had not been released as of 4:45 p.m. Thursday, but Pruitt said she "should be released (Thursday) afternoon."

Pruitt said KCSO detectives contacted Hearn at work Tuesday and placed him under arrest. Pruitt did not have detailed information about Sabrina Limon's arrest but said she was arrested in Helendale.

Pruitt said detectives believe Hearn, 24, used a handgun to shoot Robert Limon, 38, multiple times to stage a robbery.

Hearn's attorney, Clayton Campbell, said after his client's arraignment there was a substantial amount of evidence to study.

"This is the United States of America," Campbell said. "Just because you're accused it doesn't mean you're guilty."

Bob Martinez, who lives next door to the Limon residence, said Thursday that authorities "swooped right up" at the home on Tuesday evening and he figured "they were on a mission."

"They were here around 5 or 6 p.m.," Martinez said. "(Sabrina Limon) got home around 7 or 8 and they were here waiting for her."

Martinez said the Limon family moved to Helendale in 2001 and he never heard them "fighting or anything." Martinez called them great neighbors.

Roxanne Cottell, who was the Limon family's neighbor roughly 10 years before moving from Helendale, said she was having a "difficult time" believing Sabrina Limon would be responsible for her husband's murder.

Cottell said despite moving six years ago, she still kept in touch with the Limon family.

"Sabrina was always so gracious, my children loved being around her," Cottell said. "If I ever left my children with Rob (Limon), it was like leaving them with a big, tatted-out Care Bear. That was Rob. A sweet, loving man. This woman loved her children way too much to do what she is accused of."

Pruitt said detectives are still looking to identify a man seen on a surveillance video walking near the area where Robert Limon's body was found. BNSF offered a \$100,000 cash reward for tips leading to the arrest and conviction of Limon's murderer. BNSF spokeswoman Lena Kent said Thursday that the company was not issuing any statements and referred all questions to the KCSO.

Pruitt said he is unsure if Hearn is the person shown walking in the footage.

"We have not been able to positively identify that person so we have not identified if that was, in fact, Jonathan Hearn," Pruitt said. "We released the footage in August and recently re-released the footage because we are actively trying to identify and question that person."

Hearn is being held at Central Receiving Facility in Bakersfield and is ineligible for bail, booking records show.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to call Pruitt at 661-303-4592. Those wishing to remain anonymous can call the WeTip Hotline at 800-782-7463 or leave information on the WeTip website at www.wetip.com.

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Jonathan Michael Hearn is arraigned in Kern County Superior Court for the alleged murder of Robert Limon. (Henry A. Barrios / The Californian)

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