

By Jan Schultz and Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

IMPERIAL 4:50 p.m. MDT—The Nebraska State Patrol, in conjunction with the Imperial Police Department and Chase County Sheriff's Office continue searching an area west of Imperial for the victim and a suspect in connection with a kidnapping that occurred in Lincoln on Saturday, Aug. 24.

Around 3:30 a.m. MDT, Sunday, Aug. 25, an Imperial officer on foot patrol spotted a car matching the description of the vehicle involved in the kidnapping driving down a street in the west part of Imperial. The car took off and a search for the vehicle began.

Around 7:30 a.m. MDT, a farmer in the area called the Imperial Police Department to report he had located a 1998 Gold Chrysler Concord abandoned on a driveway at the end of an irrigated farm field. The plates had been removed but the car was identified by the VIN number as the vehicle driven by the suspect, Dwayne Lawrence, 38, Lincoln. A perimeter was set up and a search began.

The suspect, Dwayne Lawrence, 38, and the victim Julie Hanes, 38, Lincoln, are believed to be on foot. The couple was sighted along a county road north of Imperial Sunday morning by a local motorist who contacted officials, reporting a suspicious couple.

An NSP helicopter, along with K-9 units and officers from the Nebraska State Patrol, Imperial Police Department and Chase County Sheriff's Office are currently searching an eight-mile area approximately two miles northwest of Imperial.

During a press conference late Sunday afternoon, Chase County Sheriff Kevin Mueller said

more than 30 officers are on the scene. The FBI was also called in at the request of the Lincoln Police Department. A NSP SWAT team was also on the scene.

Mueller and NSP Cpt. Jim Parrish of North Platte said they have conducted rural house-to-house checks in the targeted area and are advising farmers in rural areas to remove keys from vehicles. No vehicles in the area have been reported missing, according to officers.

Although no further sightings of the couple have been reported, Parrish said they still strongly believe the couple remains in the area and are on foot.

The search area includes numerous irrigated corn fields. Parrish said the aerial search has been hampered by the thick cover of the corn fields. Attempts to use infrared spotting equipment proved ineffective due to the heat being held by the corn fields. They hope to resume that activity if temperatures cool down.

Parrish said law enforcement will remain on the scene throughout the night.

Imperial residents were notified via a CodeRed alert again Sunday afternoon that Lawrence and his captive remain at large. Two alerts were issued Sunday morning. Residents are asked to remain vigilant and to report suspicious activity to 911.