Search for Portland woman ends as odds of survival dwindle

By Rick Bella, The Oregonian

ESTACADA -- Authorities are suspending their search at sundown for a Southeast Portland woman missing in the Mount Hood National Forest since last week.

However, the case will remain open and investigators will continue to follow leads and tips in hopes of finding Lidiya Dmitriyevna Russu, who hasn't returned home since Thursday.

Sgt. James Rhodes, Clackamas County Sheriff's Office spokesman, said search leaders consulted today with Dr. Terri Schmidt, a wilderness survival expert on the OHSU Hospital staff.

"She said the odds of her surviving beyond today are so low that the risk to searchers begins to outweigh our chances of success," Rhodes said. "The weather there has been horrible -- in the high 30s and low 40s, with high winds and pouring-down rain."

Russu took off wearing just a house dress and flip-flop sandals, unprepared to spend the night in the woods. Foul play is not suspected.

Since Saturday, searchers have focused on a 100-square-mile area around the old High Rock Lookout off Forest Service Road 4610, more than an hour's drive southeast of Estacada, after Russu's 2000 Hyundai Elantra was found.

However, ground teams using thermal-imaging cameras and tracking dogs have found no trace of Russu. Additional teams from Deschutes, Benton and Crook counties joined the search today, though reconnaissance aircraft were again grounded by bad weather.

Russu is described as 5-foot-4, about 155 pounds with brown eyes and long black hair. Rhodes urged anyone with information about Russu or her whereabouts to call local authorities. Portland Police Detective Mike Weinstein will accept clues and information at 503-823-0446.

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