

## CAPITOLA HOMICIDE

# Coroner: Knife slash killed paramedic student

By **STEPHEN BAXTER**

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CAPITOLA — Aaron Carpenter, the 36-year-old U.S. Army veteran found stabbed to death in an apartment Sunday, had been slashed by a knife that hit his jugular vein and carotid artery, the county Coroner's office reported Friday.

A knife and a clothing iron found at the scene were used as deadly weapons in the slaying, according to a criminal complaint filed by Assistant District Attorney Celia Rowland.

Marcos Robert Chavez, the 23-year-old suspected in his death, was a U.S. Marine discharged earlier this year, prosecutors said. Chavez also was a Cabrillo College economics student who did work-study with Veterans Affairs, authorities said.

Carpenter was about to finish a paramedic EMT program at Cabrillo and did work-study at the Santa Cruz County Vets Center on 41st Avenue.

Prosecutors have not yet clarified the nature of their relationship, whether they



**CARPENTER**

worked together at the Vets Center or what prompted Carpenter's alleged slaying.

"We are still investigating the motive for the crime," Rowland said Friday.

"There are a number of leads that detectives with [Capitola police] and an inspector from the D.A.'s office are pursuing."

Cabrillo College spokeswoman Kristin Fabos said Chavez enrolled at the college in spring 2011. He majored in economics and took courses in anthropology and public speaking, Fabos said.

Carpenter was expected to complete an associate's degree in December in the paramedic EMT program with a major in fire technology.

He was found dead in Chavez's studio apartment, which was attached to a home on a quiet cul-de-sac on the 3200 block of Virgil Lane in Capitola. Neighbors said they heard a man and a woman

yelling that night and a woman crying at the home around 9:45 p.m.

About 10:45 p.m., police received several calls about a disturbance. One neighbor said he heard "banging" coming from the home before police arrived.

Chavez was in the backyard and was arrested there within minutes, Rowland said. It was the 11th homicide in the county in 2011 but the first homicide in Capitola since July 2010.

In that case, a 34-year-old man was shot on the 4100 block of Clares Street and found in a car in a Soquel High School parking lot, prosecutors said.

In Carpenter's case, Capitola police called investigators from the California Department of Justice. A judge signed a search warrant for the studio apartment on Tuesday afternoon, Rowland said.

The warrant was not in the criminal complaint field and prosecutors declined to describe items sought in the warrant.

Department of Justice crime-scene analysts and Capitola police photographed the studio,

and a blood splatter expert analyzed blood evidence in the studio. A fingerprint examiner also investigated, Rowland said.

"The Capitola Police Department has devoted a lot of resources to the investigation of this case," Rowland said Friday. "Particularly since it is a department that serves a small population and does not have a tremendous number of officers and detectives, the dedication of resources is to be commended and is paying dividends."

Carpenter's friends and family this week described him as an adventurous person who was preparing to move from Capitola to Maui at the end of this month.

"He was full of energy and full of life," said Jennifer Williams, who was Carpenter's girlfriend for about 2 1/2 years.

She said they broke up in August, and she described Carpenter as a loyal and devoted friend. They learned to surf together in Capitola. He scuba dived in Monterey.

"He was definitely all about helping people out and he loved the outdoors," Williams said.