

# Sniper search hindered by unclear composite

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP) — People who saw the Washington-area sniper aim, open fire and flee in a white van were not able to give investigators enough details to create a composite sketch, police said Wednesday. It was the latest setback in the hunt for the gunman who has killed nine people in two weeks. "Unfortunately, distance and darkness, and perhaps adrenaline have made them unable to give a clear composite that we

can disseminate," Montgomery County Police Capt. Nancy Demme said. "I know that's not what the public wants to hear."

Investigators said Monday night's shooting of 47-year-old FBI analyst Linda Franklin outside a Falls Church, Va., Home Depot store was the first time witnesses saw an actual shooting rather than just shadowy figures fleeing.

More than one bystander reported seeing the shooter, but

their descriptions were not consistent, investigators said. The gunman was variously described as dark-skinned, olive-skinned, Middle Eastern and Hispanic.

"The only common denominator thus far is male," Demme said. "We don't have a refined description to go by."

Demme said one witness told police the shooter used an AK-74 rifle. Police said the weapon can fire the .223-caliber round that has been the sniper's bullet of choice.

"The witness firmly believes this is the weapon," Demme said. "But we have to keep in mind that weapons are interchangeable, like vehicles. That may be what he thinks he saw."

So far police have released composite images of a white box truck and white vans — either a Chevrolet Astro or Ford Econoline — that have been seen at more than one shooting.

Demme gave a "how-to" list of tips for potential witnesses in case the sniper strikes again. Among them: Stare in the direction of the bullet noise, carry around a pen to take notes and, if necessary, write down details on your hand. She also warned witnesses not to "contaminate" their memories by comparing notes with other people or the media.

Since Oct. 2, there have been 11 shootings in Maryland, Virginia and Washington that have left nine people dead and two wounded. The victims were cut down by a single bullet as they went about their everyday activities. A tarot death card left at one scene read: Dear Mister Policeman, I am God."

Law enforcement sources told The Associated Press there was no indication the sniper targeted Franklin because of her job with the FBI's Cyber-Crimes Division, created last year to focus on computer crimes as well as intellectual property cases. Police said Franklin was not assigned to the sniper case.

## Searching for a sniper

U.S. Army surveillance planes, like the RC-7B Airborne Reconnaissance Low, were preparing Wednesday to begin flying in an effort to assist police in tracking the Washington area sniper.

### SEARCH MODES

#### Single-beam

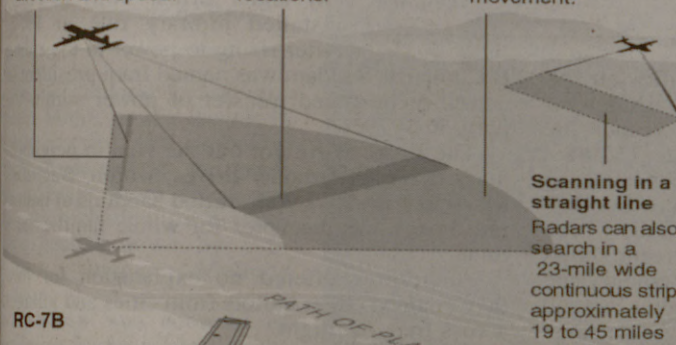
A 2 degree-wide sector monitors single targets and determines precise direction and speed.

#### Narrow

A 5 degree sector tracks large targets and monitors precise locations.

#### General

A 90 degree sector is used for locating general areas of movement.



#### Scanning in a straight line

Radars can also search in a 23-mile wide continuous strip approximately 19 to 45 miles away from the aircraft.

#### RC-7B



Combined radar provides high-resolution imagery in SAR mode, and tracking of moving targets in MTI mode.

#### Synthetic Aperture Radar/Moving Target Indicator (SAR/MTI)

Combined radar provides high-resolution imagery in SAR mode, and tracking of moving targets in MTI mode.

#### Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR)

Infrared (video) camera detects radiated heat, such as hot exhaust or a person against a cooler background.

#### Workstations

Data is fed into on-board computers for real-time processing or recorded for later analysis.

#### Infrared Line Scanner (IRLS)

Search and surveillance of large ground areas.

SOURCES: Associated Press; Jane's; Federation of American Scientists

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