

Kidnapped missionary girl released

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

PARAMARIBO-- A 14-year-old Canadian girl kidnapped two days earlier in Suriname was released March 10 after her missionary parents paid a \$12,000 ransom, according to police sources.

Three armed men kidnapped the girl in the Surinamese capital of Paramaribo and threatened to kill her unless the money was paid.

She was dropped off unhurt near her home immediately after her parents, delivered the ransom. Her parents are missionaries with the Methodist Christian Liberty Academy.

The police sources identified the girl as Karissa Polttcker but did not know her home town.

Suriname, a tiny former Dutch colony on the northeastern shoulder of South America, has a long history of internal conflict but foreigners living there have seldom been affected by it. The country became independent from the Netherlands in 1975. A military coup in 1980 with Cuban and Libyan help brought instability, repression and an economic decline.

Internationally supervised elections were held in 1991.

Suriname's constitution guarantees freedom of religion. 24% of the population is Moslem, 23% Hindu, and 45% Christian (21% Protestant).

Approximately 160 missionaries from 22 agencies serve in the country. Most missionaries report they have been free to minister, but have suffered limitations in movement and facilities because of the political situation.

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