

Foetus stolen from the womb

By Margaret Stafford

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Bobbi Jo Stinnett is shown in an undated photo provided by Nodaway-Holt High School.

Photo: AP

A baby girl who apparently was cut from her mother's womb was found in good health yesterday, a day after the mother's slaying, and two people were being questioned by police.

Sheriff Ben Espey said authorities were awaiting DNA testing to confirm the newborn was the child of Bobbi Jo Stinnett, 23, an eight-months-pregnant woman found slain in her Missouri home on Friday. The child was found in Kansas.

"It's about as good as we can get, people," Sheriff Espey said at a news conference.

Missouri State Highway Patrol Sergeant Sheldon Lyon said authorities were questioning a man and a woman who were in the same location as the baby when it was found.

A red Honda hatchback matching a description distributed earlier by police was in the driveway of the home.

Doctors said the baby could have suffered a variety of traumas during the assault, including a lack of oxygen. But the girl could survive if treated.

"Ninety-five per cent are going to do pretty well given a modest amount of medical attention," said Dr Perry Clark, medical director of the neonatal intensive care unit at the University of Kansas Hospital.

Mrs Stinnett, married for little more than a year and expecting her first child, worked at an engine factory in nearby Maryville.

Her husband was at work at the time she was killed, authorities said.

There were no signs of a struggle and no indication of forced entry into Mrs Stinnett's home in the small community of 500 people in north-western Missouri.

A neighbour, Bill Dragoo, said Mrs Stinnett and her husband raised dogs and "didn't bother anybody".

"It blows my mind that this happened," he said. "She was such a shy person. They didn't deserve

this."

Several pregnant women have been killed in recent years by attackers who then removed their foetuses, in some cases to pass the children off as their own.

In the most recent case, a 21-year-old woman was shot dead in Oklahoma in December last year, allegedly by another woman who pretended the six-month-old foetus was her child.

On that occasion, the foetus died and prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

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