

Vietnam vets stalk grounds for missing girl

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A contingent of jungle-seasoned Vietnam veterans, rallied by Kenneth Schweiger to aid in the search for his missing 12-year-old daughter, took to the dense woodlands at Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) yesterday with the idea of matching military wits with Andre Rand.

Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York swept into Westerleigh yesterday, encouraging and supporting the Schweigers, and urging the volunteers on in their hunt for the girl.

"A child like Jennifer has a very special place in my heart," said Cardinal O'Connor, who started his clerical career as a priest working with children with Down's syndrome. "Children like Jennifer are a special treasure... to lose that, nothing is more difficult for people to bear."

Rand has been charged with kidnapping Jennifer Schweiger,

and police managed to follow the girl's trail to SIDC before losing it. It is believed that Rand was an Army veteran, possibly in a commando unit, but authorities have refused to release any information about the suspect's background.

"We'll use military methods to track down a military mind," said Tony Bianco of Dongan Hills, one of the Vietnam veterans. "If he is a veteran, he would be thinking along the lines they taught him, and we all know what to look for. We're putting our government training to good use."

Bianco and other veterans, most dressed in army fatigues and wearing supply belts, joined several hundred people who gathered at the Holy Family R.C. Church yesterday to press the search for some trace of Jennifer.

As searchers gathered in the church meeting hall at about noon, reviewing maps and plotting strategy for the day,

(See SEARCH, Page A 2)



Cardinal O'Connor addresses the volunteers who spent the day searching for Jennifer.

200-1000