

Posted December 31, 2011

Updated December 12, 2014

# Ayla case now in state police hands

WATERVILLE -- The search for 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds is now a criminal investigation and the Maine State Police are taking the lead, Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey said Friday.

BY **BEN MCCANNA** AND **DOUG HARLOW** STAFF WRITER

Share



Comment

WATERVILLE — The search for 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds is now a criminal investigation and the Maine State Police are taking the lead, Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey said Friday.

“At this point, we believe that foul play has occurred in connection with Ayla’s disappearance,” Massey said in a written release. “We base our conclusions on evidence gathered by investigators during the past two weeks. This case has evolved from the search for a missing child to a criminal investigation.”

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



Photo by Jeff Pouland CONTINUING THE INVESTIGATION: Standing in a neighbor's yard, authorities continue their investigation into the disappearance of Ayla Reynolds near her home on Violette Avenue in Waterville on Friday. *staff photo by Jeff Pouland*



Search photos available for purchase: [Photo Store](#) →

For that reason, Massey said he has asked the Maine State Police Major Crimes Unit to assume the lead role in the investigation.

Massey added that Waterville police will continue to work on the case along with other agencies until Ayla Reynolds is found.

“Our commitment to finding Ayla and explaining the circumstances surrounding her disappearance is as strong as it was on December 17th,” he said.

Department of Public Safety Spokesman Steve McCausland said the Major Crimes Unit is the new name for the Criminal Investigation Division, or CID.

McCausland said the unit is tasked with investigating homicides, suspicious deaths and major investigations.

“This case would fall into that latter category,” he said.

Earlier on Friday, a state police evidence response team truck returned Friday to the Violette Avenue home where was reported missing from her bed two weeks ago today.

State troopers using surveying equipment appeared to be taking measurements from the driveway to the home at 29 Violette Ave. where Ayla lived with her father, Justin DiPietro.

A window of the modest vinyl-sided house on the driveway side of DiPietro’s house had been removed and appeared to be part of the measuring detail.

A pickup truck with Massachusetts license plates was parked nearby, as was a Maine detective’s car. A man wearing a Massachusetts State Police jacket also was on the scene.

McCausland said Massachusetts detectives offered special investigative equipment to aid in the investigation.

“And we took them up on the offer,” he said.

McCausland declined to provide details on the equipment and its uses.

A growing shrine of stuffed animals left in support of the missing child served as a backdrop to Friday’s police activity.

Ayla was last seen sleeping the night of Friday, Dec. 16.

Police said DiPietro, 24, reported his daughter missing just before 9 a.m. Dec. 17, some 10 to 12 hours after she was put to bed. They said the toddler did not wander off on her own and she was taken from the home by someone, though police have stopped short of calling it a kidnapping.

A \$30,000 reward offered Monday for information leading authorities to the missing toddler remains unclaimed, police said. There have been no arrests and Ayla, who was last seen in polka dot pajamas and her left arm in a cast, has not been found.

Waterville Police Chief Joseph Massey said The Maine Warden Service, which has conducted exhaustive searches of the entire area, have suspended operations but will be on call. Any other searches will be based on new information, he said.

At its peak, the search area measured five miles in width — north to south from the epicenter on Violette

Avenue — and 2 1/2 miles in depth, from Messalonskee Stream west past First Rangeway.

Ayla's mother, 23-year-old Trista Reynolds, of Portland, filed for sole custody Dec. 15, a day before her daughter was last seen in Waterville.

Massey said both parents have been interviewed by police and have been cooperative. Details of the investigation have not been released by police.

Police on Thursday confirmed that two vehicles seized from the driveway by police Dec. 19 have been returned to their owners. One is a Ford Explorer registered to DiPietro and the other a Hyundai registered to a Portland woman whose name is not being made public. Police declined to say what they were looking for in the vehicles.

Doug Harlow — 612-2367

[email protected]

READ OR POST COMMENTS

Share



Were you interviewed for this story? If so, please fill out our [accuracy form](#)

[Send questions/comments to the editors.](#)

RECENT

READ

SHARED

**Kristen Cooper and Jeffrey Burr**

**Carmen Pelletier and Juan Loubier**

**Our View: Maine must heed warnings from  
lobster industry**

**Ford's Raptor for 2017: Rough, ready, and**