



Advertisement

Hope Fades For Missing Maine Toddler

Ayla Reynolds Blood Found, Police Say

Updated: 10:49 AM EST Jan 31, 2012



Share

WATERVILLE, Maine — Hope is fading among investigators who have spent six weeks looking for 20-month-old Ayla Reynolds and they have intensified their search for a body, law enforcement sources told Newscenter 5 Monday.

Advertisement

A State Police spokesman said they "hope" to find the little girl, but investigators grow "more concerned as time passes."

The toddler's blood was found splattered in the basement of 29 Violette Ave. in the Waterville home where Ayla was staying with her father, Justin DiPietro, Maine State Police said.

Several law enforcement sources said the blood appeared to have been "cleaned up" and that DiPietro left a police station when confronted with luminol-enhanced photos of his daughter's blood splatters taken by crime scene investigators a week after he reported her missing.

"Abduction is no longer a part of this investigation. We have grave doubts that an abduction took place and there is no evidence to support it," Stephen McCausland, spokesman for Maine Department of Public Safety, told Newscenter 5.

"We are focused on what happened to her in that house. There are three people in the house that have not been truthful. Their story does not pass the smell test," he said.

Law enforcement sources told McPhee that those people are Justin DiPietro, his girlfriend, Courtney Roberts, 24, and his sister, Alisha DiPietro, 19.

McCausland confirmed that the people in the house on the night Ayla was last seen took lie-detector tests, "and they know the results."

Police have not named any suspects. NewsCenter 5 has attempted to get comments from all who were at the house the night Ayla vanished, but none of those present have responded.

DiPietro says he took and passed the lie-detector test, but police have not confirmed or denied that.

A statement appeared Monday on a [website](#) created by Ayla's mother, Trista Reynolds, saying that police told the girl's family that "more blood than a small cut would produce" was recovered in the basement.

"We urge anyone that has information about Ayla to come forward now and unburden yourself of the truth," the statement read. "Even in light of this evidence we are more determined than ever to find out what happened to Ayla and cling to the hope that she is still alive and will be returned to us."

What started as a missing person case on Dec. 17, after DiPietro told police he put his daughter to bed and woke up to find her gone, is now a criminal investigation.

DiPietro claimed she had been kidnapped, a theory that has been dismissed as implausible by the multi-agency task force investigating the girl's disappearance.

A window taken from the Violette Avenue bedroom where Justin DiPietro claimed his daughter was sleeping did not appear to be tampered with and could not be opened from the outside, law enforcement sources said.

Justin DiPietro declined to comment Monday, brushing past an Associated Press reporter outside his house without addressing questions before going inside and emphatically closing the door.

Investigators have been scouring the remote woods of Maine looking for the toddler's body. On Jan. 12, more than a dozen police divers searched an icy river near the house that Justin DiPietro lives in, but found nothing.

Last month, officials drained Maine's Messalonskee Stream so that police could search it on foot and by air overhead, which also proved fruitless.

DiPietro has denied any involvement in his daughter's disappearance. He did admit to accidentally breaking his daughter's arm weeks before he reported her missing.

He canceled a follow-up appointment with his daughter's doctor on Dec. 12, Trista Reynolds' sister, Jessica, told Newscenter 5.

"Justin knows what happened to my niece and he hasn't spoken to us since she went missing," Jessica Reynolds said.

Ayla had been living with her father since November after her mother checked herself into a rehab.