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VIDEO

Police say it is 'highly unlikely Ayla Reynolds will be found alive,' seek more information from father

Next



By Christopher Cousins and Seth Koenig, BDN Staff
Posted May 31, 2012, at 1:19 p.m.
Last modified June 01, 2012, at 3:59 p.m.

WATERVILLE, Maine — Police said Thursday that it is highly unlikely missing toddler Ayla Reynolds will be found alive but said the investigation and search will continue.

"We think it is highly unlikely Ayla Reynolds will be found alive," Maine Department of Public Safety Spokesman Stephen McCausland said at a Thursday afternoon press conference. "Nothing points in that direction."

Ayla's parents were notified Thursday for the first time that police believe it is unlikely she is still alive. Officials met Tuesday morning to review the case and made the determination, McCausland said.

Ayla's mother, Trista Reynolds, was thankful for the information, McCausland said. Ayla's father was more reserved.

"His reaction was no reaction," McCausland said.

Upon hearing that news on television Thursday afternoon, Ayla's mother, Trista Reynolds, as well as her parents and brother, erupted with emotion in Reynolds' Portland apartment.

"I think my worst nightmare has come true," Trista Reynolds said through tears. "I think what hurts the most is that I don't even know where she's at. I couldn't, even if I wanted to, give her the most proper burial. I couldn't even do that if I wanted to, because somebody has got her body somewhere, and nobody can tell me where."

Trista Reynolds and her father, Ron Reynolds, renewed calls for the baby's

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Elie Binder — TORONTO, CANADA

father, Justin DiPietro, from whose custody Ayla went missing in December, to tell police more about the night she disappeared. Police have said they believe DiPietro and his sister and girlfriend who were home that night know more than they're telling investigators.

"Justin DiPietro is a coward and no father," Trista Reynolds said. "A father would not allow this to happen to his child. A father would say something, would speak for his child. If he loved Ayla in any way, any way at all, he would speak for her. He would say what happened. He wouldn't be the coward that he is right now."

Ron Reynolds said DiPietro needs to find "the guts to get in my face and tell me where my granddaughter is."

"We need closure for this family," Ron Reynolds said. "We need to know where Ayla is, we need to bring her home, we need to let the authorities do their investigation, we need to have closure, and people need to pay."

McCausland refused to elaborate on any new information in the case, saying that police have not charged anybody and that police continue to analyze objects found in several searches.

A group of local businesses that had set a [\\$30,000 reward](#) for information in the Ayla case also announced Thursday that the reward would expire June 30. McCausland said the end of that reward is not connected with any developments in the case.

McCausland continued to urge Ayla's father, Justin DiPietro, to be more forthcoming with police.

"We think that he or the two others inside that home ... may have more information that they just haven't told us," McCausland said.

McCausland would not say whether DiPietro, or anyone else, is or is not considered a suspect in Ayla's disappearance. But McCausland did say that DiPietro is free to leave town. The investigation, which has gone on for more than five months and ranks as the largest missing-person probe in state history, has now garnered 1,127 leads, but those leads are now coming more slowly. He said a core of detectives from the Maine State Police remain assigned to the case.

"This case will remain open and active until we find her. Period," said McCausland.

Ayla was 20 months old when she was reported missing on Dec. 17, 2011, by her father, Justin DiPietro, who said he and others at his home on Violette Avenue in Waterville [discovered her gone that morning](#). Before that day, Ayla had lived primarily with her mother, Trista Reynolds of Portland, but was staying with her father because Reynolds had checked herself into a hospital to deal with substance abuse problems.

In January, investigators said they had ruled out the possibility that Ayla was abducted and said three adults who were in the home that night — DiPietro, his girlfriend Courtney Roberts and his sister, Alisha DiPietro — were [not being forthcoming with investigators](#) about what happened.

Maine Department of Public Safety spokesman Stephen McCausland has said throughout the investigation that no one has been ruled out as a suspect in the toddler's disappearance. Though much of the police probe has been conducted in secrecy, there have been several public searches in the Waterville area, including dive teams [inspecting the Kennebec River and Messalonskee Stream](#). Last month, investigators said they had [discovered some items](#) near the



"If we don't demarcate penultimate items in a list from coordinating conjunctions, just what separates man fro
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Hathaway Creative Center in Waterville — which had been the site of searches in previous months — that could be related to Ayla’s disappearance, but they would not say what the items were and have not discussed them since.

Also in January, investigators revealed that [blood found in the basement of the DiPietro household belonged to Ayla](#), though they would not say how much blood was found or what it told them about her disappearance, if anything. McCausland has said that evidence in the case — including the blood and other items taken from the DiPietro home and elsewhere — is being analyzed by forensics experts at the Maine State Police Crime Laboratory in Augusta. McCausland has repeatedly declined to discuss the evidence in detail.

Early in the investigation, police conducted polygraph tests on DiPietro and Trista Reynolds. Though police have not discussed the results of those tests, DiPietro [has said that he told the truth](#) — that Ayla had been abducted. Reynolds told the Bangor Daily News in January that she was [unable to complete the test](#) because of what she described as a medical condition.

The case has attracted [intense media attention in Maine and across the country](#), and several [vigils and public events](#) held on behalf of Ayla have had strong attendance. The case has also boiled over in other ways, including [objects that were thrown through windows in the DiPietro household](#) in February and [an assault, also in February, involving Lance DiPietro](#), who is Ayla’s uncle.

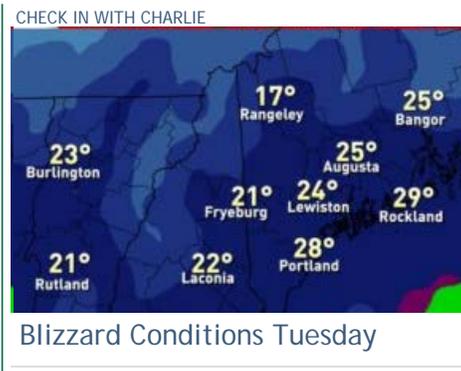
Trista Reynolds, in an interview with the Bangor Daily News in January, said Ayla was [just beginning to form words](#) when she disappeared and was constantly trying to be the center of attention with her playful antics and outgoing personality.

“I used to tell her she was going to be mommy’s star, but this isn’t how I wanted her to become a star,” said Trista. “She’s got to come home. I can’t imagine the rest of my life without her.”

CORRECTION:

This article has been updated to clarify that police have refused to say whether anybody is or is not a suspect. Because of an editor’s error, an earlier version of this article stated that police said DiPietro is not a suspect.

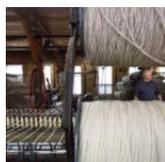
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