

Beat: Local

5 missing children found dead in Alabama, father confesses

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USPA News - Five young children from the U.S. state of South Carolina, who were reported missing by their mother last week, were found dead Tuesday after their father was arrested in Mississippi over the weekend and led investigators to a dirt road in rural Alabama, authorities said. The five children, ages 1 to 8, were last seen in Lexington, South Carolina, when they were their father, 32-year-old Timothy Ray Jones, Jr., who is the children's primary legal custodian.

The children's mother reported them missing at 6:11 p.m. local time on September 3 when she told deputies that she had been unable to contact her ex-husband. Lexington County Sheriff Lewis McCarty said the mother told deputies that there had been other occasions in the past when she was also unable to contact Jones, but they had also failed to show up for a family gathering on September 1 for Labor Day. Neighbors, meanwhile, told deputies that the children's father had said he was moving with his children to another state. On Saturday, Jones was arrested at a motor vehicle public safety checkpoint in Smith County, Mississippi, on suspicion of driving under the influence. His SUV was towed and, upon inspection of the vehicle, evidence of a crime was found. Deputies then inquired the National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) computer database and learnt Jones was being sought over a welfare concern for his children. After being questioned for several days, Jones reportedly confessed to killing his children and led investigators to a dirt road in rural Alabama, where investigators located the bodies of five young children inside individual plastic bags off Highway 10 near the Oak Hill community in Wilcox County. Smith County District Attorney Daniel Jones told NBC News that investigators believe the children were first killed in South Carolina, after which Jones drove for hours until he dumped their bodies in Alabama. He said the father was allegedly high on synthetic marijuana when he was detained on Saturday and notes referring to violence against children were also found. The prosecutor added that Jones had claimed his children were plotting to kill him, indicating that he may be suffering from a mental illness. "I think he probably just went mad," the district attorney told NBC News, describing Jones as a computer genius. Lexington County Coroner Earl Wells was making arrangements to transport the sets of remains back to South Carolina in order to conduct autopsies and to formally identify the children. It was not immediately known how the five children were killed and when the murders took place, but one relative said he last saw the children alive on August 28. South Carolina deputies obtained an arrest warrant for Jones on Tuesday on a charge of unlawful neglect of a child by a legal custodian, and detectives expect to obtain additional arrest warrants in the coming days. Jones is expected to be extradited back to South Carolina to face the charges.

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