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INQUIRY SPREADS ON 6 CHILDREN AND CULT

By RICHARD HALLORAN and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES



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The New York Times Archives

Police officials here said today that six disheveled children found in Tallahassee, Fla., might be the offspring of members of a little-known cult, but the officials said they had not ruled out the possibility of kidnapping.

Police officials in Tallahassee said today that the children were moved from a shelter because of telephoned threats received there, The Associated Press reported.

Capt. William White 3d, a spokesman for the District of Columbia Police Department, said, "At this point, it appears that those children are the children of members of this group." He was referring to members of a cult known as the Finders, who have occupied at least two buildings here.

But Captain White added, "We haven't ruled out any possibilities." Children

Found in Florida

He declined to speculate on what the possibilities might be but other police officials said they included kidnapping or some type of international market for children.

The children, two girls and four boys 2 to 7 years old, were discovered in a Tallahassee playground on Thursday. Two men, Douglas Edward Zimmerman, 27 years old, and Michael Houlihan, 28, were arrested in the case and charged with child abuse.

Subsequently, the police here obtained warrants to search a house in Northwest Washington and a warehouse in Northeast Washington, both believed to have been occupied by the Finders. Captain White said they had seized boxes of records, documents and computer programs.

"We have a very long, tedious process of reviewing this material ahead of us," the captain said.

Detectives in the investigation said the review would require the weekend at least. The detectives said that they had begun to doubt that child pornography was involved. However, he said that the evidence indicated that children were involved in rituals. They declined to comment on reports that the Finders were worshipers of the devil.

According to the A.P., the authorities have received a memorandum from a man who said he owns the Washington house asserting that the children were on a vacation trip in Florida with the approval of their mothers. A spokesman for Joseph diGenova, the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, declined to comment on the memo, the A.P. said. Search Also Made in Virginia

In neighboring Virginia, the authorities said they had completed their part in the investigation by searching five places in Madison County where members of the group were said to have occupied farms and homes.

Lieut. J. P. Henries of the Madison County Sheriff's Office said, "No obvious new evidence of criminal activity was found."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has also been called into the case. Police officials here suggested that whatever legal action might arise from the case would be in Federal rather than in local courts because it appeared that the children had been transported across state lines in possible violation of Federal laws.

Captain White said the district police had been unable to identify the children or their parents. "We're trying to find the parents," he said.

Captain White said that other people who might be related to the children were also being sought, but he declined to give details.

The Police Department spokesman said no further arrests were expected. ----
Threats Force Move TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Feb. 7 (AP) -The six children were moved from a shelter after officials there received telephone calls threatening to the children, the police said today.

The children were moved to a site that was undisclosed and were being protected by armed guards after a half-dozen threats were telephoned Friday night to a temporary shelter in Tallahassee, according to a police spokesman, Scott Hunt.

Mr. Hunt said the Finders cult might have been accustomed to selling or smuggling the children of its members out of the country.

The two men found with the children at a playground remained in the Leon County Jail today, charged with one count each of felony child abuse and held in lieu of \$100,000 bond each.

The children, who had not been bathed in several days when they were found, had insect bites and had not been fed in more than a day. Investigators said the children appeared to be ignorant of such daily conveniences as hot water and electricity.

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