

Murder charges added in Smyrna child remains case

Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced Tuesday that Kristie Haas has been [reindicted](#) for her role in the abuse and death of Emma Cole, a child whose remains were found at a Smyrna softball field. Haas, 28, will now face two counts of Murder by Abuse or Neglect First Degree under a superseding indictment, in addition to existing charges.

“Today we are closer to justice for Emma,” said Attorney General Jennings. “Few towns in America are as tight-knit as Smyrna, and this murder shook the community to its core. From the beginning this case was not only deeply disturbing, but incredibly challenging to investigate; it was through sheer force of will and collaboration that Smyrna PD and the FBI cracked this case and that we were able to indict. Emma’s abusers and her murderer will be held accountable. We owe that to the excellent police work that went into this case.”

“While Brandon and Kristie Haas’ initial arrests provided some relief, we knew that the mission was not complete until we were able to bring a homicide charge in this case,” said Lt. Brian Donner of the Smyrna Police Department. “Today culminates all that hard work and investigation. On behalf of Chief Torrie James and the members of the Smyrna Police Department, we would like to thank the Attorney General’s office for staying the course with us and seeing this case through. We would like to thank the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their expertise and resources that made these charges possible. Finally, we all owe lead investigator William Davis of the Smyrna Police Department our thanks for his tenacity and hard work throughout the course of this investigation.”

“Emma Grace had a full life left to live and that life was

taken. At just three years old she was taken from her friends, her loved ones and her sisters and brother,” said Rachel Byrd, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Baltimore Field Office. “When the most vulnerable of our citizens – our children – are victimized we will do everything in our power to hold the perpetrators accountable and to protect others from harm.”

Haas will still face the following charges included in an April 5 indictment:

- One count of Child Abuse First Degree, a felony
- Three counts of felony Endangering the Welfare of a Child, as well as three counts of misdemeanor Endangering the Welfare of a Child
- One count of Assault Second Degree, a felony
- One count of Hindering Prosecution, a felony
- One count of Abusing a Corpse, a misdemeanor
- One count of Reckless Burning, a misdemeanor

Haas could face a life sentence if convicted. Her husband, Brandon Haas, is also facing charges of Child Abuse, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, and Hindering Prosecution, and could be sentenced to a maximum of 45 years for his role in Emma’s death.

On September 13, 2019, officers of the Smyrna Police Department responded to a report of a child’s remains being discovered at the Smyrna-Clayton Little Lass Softball fields. The discovery sparked a multijurisdictional investigation into the child’s identity and the circumstances surrounding her death.

After more than a year of investigation, the child was identified as Emma Grace Cole, who was three years old at the time of her death. At the time of her death, Emma resided with her mother, Kristie Haas, her stepfather, Brandon Haas, and her siblings in Smyrna, Delaware.

The original indictment alleged that Emma was the victim of child abuse before her death. Both Haases are alleged to have deprived Emma of sufficient food and needed medical attention and subjected Emma and her siblings to excessive forced exercise and inappropriate physical discipline. Kristie Haas is now formally charged with causing Emma's death after engaging in this abuse and neglect.

Both Haases were arrested in Pennsylvania on October 2, 2020, as part of a joint operation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and multiple state and local law enforcement agencies.

The investigation has been led by the Smyrna Police Department with significant investigative support from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Also assisting the investigation were the United States Secret Service, the Delaware State Police, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Delaware Division of Forensic Science, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, the Delaware Department of Transportation, the Delaware Office of the State Fire Marshal, the Newtown Township (Pa.) Police Department, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The DOJ reminds the press and public that an indictment is a formal accusation and that the defendants are presumed innocent until convicted at a trial, at which the State will bear the burden of proof.