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Ewing Township Police Officer and Wife Indicted in the Death of Their Three-Month-Old Daughter

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri announced that a Mercer County grand jury returned a three-count indictment this week charging a Ewing Township police officer and his wife in the December 2018 death of their three-month-old daughter, Hailey.

Daniel Bannister, 31, was indicted on one count of first-degree murder while Catherine Bannister was indicted on one count of second-degree reckless manslaughter. Both husband and wife were additionally indicted on one count of second-degree endangering the welfare of a child.

On December 5, 2018, Ewing Township Emergency Medical Services responded to the Bannister's Ewing home on a 911 call for an unresponsive three-month-old baby having difficulty breathing. Emergency medical technicians assessed the baby, who was not breathing and in cardiac arrest. The baby, later identified as Hailey Bannister, was transported to Capital Health Medical Center - Hopewell, where medical personnel determined Hailey suffered a fractured skull, brain bleed, and had multiple fractured ribs. Hailey was listed in critical condition and transferred from Capital Health to Robert Wood Johnson Children's Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ.

Due to the suspicious nature of Hailey's injuries, the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office Special Victims Unit and Homicide Task Force were contacted and advised of Hailey's status. Detectives responded to Robert Wood Johnson Children's Hospital and began their investigation on December 5. After several days of hospitalization, Hailey died on December 11, 2018.

An autopsy was conducted in December 2018 by the Middlesex County Medical Examiner's Office and following additional testing, analysis of medical documentation, and forensic review, Hailey's death was ruled a homicide. It was concluded that Hailey's cause of death was complications from blunt impact trauma of the head including skull fractures and subdural hemorrhage. The nature of Hailey's injuries indicated an ongoing pattern of abuse.

The indictment is a result of an investigation by the Mercer County Homicide Task Force. Assistant Prosecutor Michael Grillo presented the case to the grand jury.

Despite having been indicted, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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