

TOLL RISES IN TEXAS MIGRANT TRAGEDY; ANOTHER HEATSTROKE VICTIM IN HIGHWAY SMUGGLING CASE

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Body

The death **toll** from this week's botched **smuggling** attempt reached 19 on Friday when an immigrant died at a hospital, two days after being pulled out of a stifling semitrailer.

The 29-year-old man, believed to be from Honduras, died at DeTar Hospital Navarro in Victoria, southwest of Houston, from complications from **heatstroke**. The **toll** is believed to be the deadliest in recent U.S. history.

Also Friday, 18 suspected illegal immigrants were found alive in a tractor-trailer at a truck stop not far from where the other **victims** were found. None required hospitalization. They were turned over to immigration authorities and the truck driver was taken into custody.

Wednesday, sheriff's deputies at a truck stop south of Victoria opened a trailer with 17 bodies inside. With two deaths since then, the **smuggling case's toll** is even higher than a 1987 incident in which 18 immigrants died in a rail car in West **Texas**.

In initial autopsy reports, Travis County Medical Examiner Roberto Bayardo said the **victims** died from dehydration, hyperthermia and suffocation. Four **victims**, including a 5-year-old boy, may have suffocated under people on top of them.

"It's difficult to tell if they were dead at the time or they died as a result of the piling up of the other bodies," Bayardo said.

The driver of the truck, Tyrone Williams, 32, of Schenectady, N.Y., told authorities he struck a \$2,500 deal with two men Tuesday to haul 16 immigrants from the border town of Harlingen north into **Texas**. Instead, authorities said, more than 100 men, women and children from Mexico and Central America were loaded into the hot and virtually airless truck.

Williams was charged with trafficking in illegal immigrants. Authorities were searching for three other suspects. They were also looking for 30 to 50 illegal immigrants believed to have fled the trailer.

Defense attorney Craig Washington said he was looking into whether Williams was properly advised of his rights and why he was questioned in a cold room without anything to offer him warmth.

"If he made statements, one, they may not have been accurate and, two, they may not have been of his own free will," Washington said.

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U.S. Attorney Michael Shelby said he was confident Williams was properly advised of his rights.

Also Friday, authorities in the Houston suburb of Sugar Land found 10 illegal immigrants in the bed of a pickup truck. Police said the men were OK. And the Border Patrol said it rescued 17 suspected immigrants from a railroad container car Thursday near the Texas-New Mexico state line.

Graphic

Photo;

PHOTO: DAVID J. PHILLIP -- ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tyrone Williams is taken to federal court Friday in Houston, where he was charged with trafficking in illegal immigrants.

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