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Frenchwoman admits smothering eight newborn babies:



**Dominique Cottrez
is being detained while
the investigation continues.**

A woman in northern France has admitted killing her eight newborn babies but said her husband knew nothing about it, the prosecutor in the case has said.

Dominique Cottrez, 47, has been placed under investigation over the deaths, while her husband has been freed without charge.

Mr Cottrez had initially faced investigation for allegedly concealing the bodies and not reporting crimes.

Mrs Cottrez faces charges of the voluntary homicide of the babies. Being placed under investigation is the first stage of criminal proceedings that can lead to charges.

The prosecutor had requested the charges of failing to report the killings and hiding the bodies against Mr Cottrez, but the prosecutor said the investigating magistrate in the case had ruled against this.

Wrapped in plastic;

The remains were found in the village of Villers-au-Tertre, near the northern city of Lille, on Wednesday.

Police with sniffer dogs searched two houses in the quiet commuter village after the new owners of a house called them following the discovery of remains in the garden. The house belonged to the parents of the arrested woman.

Police then conducted searches in another house in the village - that of the arrested couple - where the bodies of more babies were found.

Mrs Cottrez said she was fully aware of her pregnancies, but that she did not want any more children and did not want to see a doctor for contraception, the prosecutor in the case said at a news conference.

"This is a case outside of the norms given the number of newborns," he added. Mrs Cottrez said that after a first difficult birth because of her heavy weight, she did not want to see any more doctors. She was alone in her pregnancies and while giving birth, the prosecutor said.

The remains found in the first house were wrapped in plastic bags, while the other six bodies were found in the garage of the second house wrapped in hermetically sealed plastic bags, hidden under a variety of objects.

The births of the eight babies were said to have taken place between 1989 and 2006-07, the prosecutor said, although further tests will be able to determine the exact dates.

Public prosecutor Eric Vaillant: "Mrs Cottrez has admitted killing the babies at birth."

Mr Cottrez said he had never noticed his wife's pregnancies because of her heavy weight, and had no idea she had been getting rid of the babies at birth, the prosecutor said.

The couple have grown-up children and grandchildren. Mrs Cottrez is a care worker while Mr Cottrez works for a construction company and is a member of the local council.

"He's on his third term in office. He used to volunteer in the community. He's a respectable man," local mayor Patrick Mercier told reporters earlier on Thursday.

Previous cases;

The BBC's Christian Fraser in Paris says France has had a string of cases in recent years involving the deaths of newborn babies.

In March, a mother confessed to killing six of her newborn children and hiding them in the cellar of her house in north-west France.

Another notorious case was that of Veronique Courjault, who was jailed last year for killing three of her babies while living in South Korea and in France. She has since been freed, having already served time in jail while on remand.

In Germany in 2006, Sabine Hilschenz was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the manslaughter of eight of her newborn babies. A ninth baby also died, but too long ago to allow a prosecution.