

Getaway car found in Alabama church fires

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP)—As they continue to evaluate evidence in a recent string of 10 church fires in rural Alabama, federal investigators have come one step closer to solving the case: They found the getaway car.

“It was a key piece of the puzzle,” said Jim Cavanaugh, director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. “That puts our investigation back more focused than before.”

While the vehicle didn’t prove to be the same dark-colored SUV authorities initially sought, it came as an “important discovery” in a case that continues to mystify investigators.

Arsonists burned 10 Baptist churches in rural Alabama in less than a month. Nine of the fires, including five on Feb. 3 and four on Feb. 7, are related. Investigators called a 10th fire on Feb. 11 arson, but they have yet to determine its relation to the others. They also continue to withhold some details of the case, saying they need to conceal some of their work in order to “leave no stone unturned.”

Subsequent fires in Mississippi and Georgia have caused alarm as well. A fire described as arson burned Spring Beulah Church in McComb, Miss., Feb. 26. Harmony Grove Baptist Church in Roswell, Ga., sustained major fire damage Feb. 27. Authorities said neither of the latest fires are related to the Alabama fires.

As they continue to wade through more than 700 leads, investigators suspect the culprits are two men in their 20s or 30s who may be close friends, based on information taken from witnesses and behavioral profiles.

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