

Beat: Politics

U.S. senator's former top aide hangs self after child porn arrest

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USPA News - Ryan Loskarn, the former chief of staff to U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander, hanged himself at his parents' home in Maryland as he awaited trial on child pornography charges, officials said on Friday. He was facing up to 30 years in prison.

Jesse Ryan Loskarn, 35, was found dead at approximately noon local time on Thursday in the basement of his parents' home in Sykesville, a town in Maryland about 32 miles (51 kilometers) north of Washington, D.C. "Family members reported finding [him] in his basement where he'd been residing with family since this past December," the Carroll County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. Loskarn's body was later transported to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Baltimore, where an autopsy established the cause of death to be hanging and the manner of death a suicide. "For everyone involved, this is a sad and tragic story from beginning to end," Alexander said in response to Friday's news. The top aide was arrested on December 11 when the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) executed a search warrant at his residence in Southeast D.C. He was later charged with one count of possession of child pornography and one count of attempt to distribute child pornography, charges which could have resulted in up to 30 years in prison if convicted. Loskarn was promptly fired after last month's arrest. "I am stunned, surprised and disappointed by what I have learned. ... The courts will judge Mr. Loskarn's guilt or innocence, but under these circumstances he cannot continue to fulfill his duties as chief of staff of this office. Therefore, as of today, I have removed him from the payroll," Alexander said hours after the December 11 arrest. According to court documents, Loskarn was identified by USPIS investigators in October last year when he allegedly shared child pornography videos through a peer-to-peer network. He had also allegedly purchased several films featuring young nude boys through a Canadian website between November 2010 and March 2011. On November 18 last year, using a peer-to-peer network, law enforcement officers downloaded a child pornography video that was being offered from a computer using an IP address registered to Loskarn's D.C. residence. The video allegedly showed the sexual abuse of a prepubescent girl between the age of 6 and 9. When officers arrived at his residence on December 11 to execute a search warrant, Loskarn did not answer the door but was seen placing a portable hard drive on the ledge outside his second floor window. Officers used a ram to force entry into the residence, where he was living alone. "During the execution of the search warrant, computer forensic examiners from the U.S. Department of Justice ... reviewed the recovered digital media to include the external Toshiba hard drive recovered from the roof," investigators said in court documents. "A computer forensic examiner located digital videos depicting child pornography within the hard drive." During last month's court appearance, federal prosecutors had argued against Loskarn's release and said that he made statements around the time of his arrest that suggested he could be a potential suicide risk, according to the Politico news website. But his lawyer, Pamela Satterfield, said suicide was not a concern and he was soon released on bail. Loskarn was ordered to stay inside his parents' home and be electronically monitored. The top aide had worked on Capitol Hill for years, including in the offices of the House Rules Committee, former U.S. Senator Jon Kyl, former U.S. Representative Wally Herger, and U.S. Representative Marsha Blackburn. After serving as staff director for the Senate Republican Conference, Loskarn was named Alexander's chief of staff in 2012.

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