

FBI'S Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) Helps Solve 38 Year-Old Cold Case

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Criminal Justice Information Services (FBI's CJIS) Division has selected its fourth annual Latent Hit of the Year. This success story highlights the identification of a suspect for murder in California from the early 1970s. The FBI CJIS Division Latent Hit of the Year highlights major cases solved when latent prints were identified by a search of the FBI's IAFIS.

On Jan. 2, 1972, officers with the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) responded to a check-the-welfare call regarding a resident of Hornblend Street who had not been seen for five days. Witnesses had last seen the 27-year-old man in the early morning hours of Dec. 28, 1971, driving off with another man believed to be in his early twenties. When they arrived at the home, officers discovered the victim's body stabbed more than 50 times. His home had been ransacked, and his 1971 Ford Torino was missing. Detectives immediately sent out a teletype to all law enforcement agencies to try and locate the victim's vehicle.

Four days after the body's discovery, the Calexico Police Department in Mexico contacted the SDPD to report that the 1971 Ford Torino had been abandoned in Mexicali, Mexico. Detectives conducted a search of area pawnshops and discovered items stolen from the man's residence at a shop located just a quarter of a mile from the Mexican border. The shop produced the pawn ticket and a receipt for \$25 made out to the victim for a stereo receiver taken from his residence. Upon receiving the stereo, detectives quickly discovered a palmprint in dried blood on the receiver. Detectives worked countless hours trying to identify a suspect using latent fingerprints recovered from a cigarette lighter left at the crime scene (Figure 1), prints from the Ford Torino (Figure 2), and the bloody palmprint from the stolen stereo receiver. However, all leads were exhausted and the case went unsolved.

On Jan. 30, 2008, the SDPD's Cold Case Team reopened the case, and it was assigned to Latent Print Examiner Gloria Pasqual. Using fingerprint technology not available in 1972, she reanalyzed the latent fingerprints and palmprints that were collected as evi-

dence. Pasqual submitted the latent prints for a search against the IAFIS, which processed them and returned a response containing 20 possible matches within two hours. Latent fingerprints left at the crime scene matched one of those candidates. A review of the suspect's rap sheet revealed a previous murder in which he was found not guilty.

After months of investigative work, SDPD Lead Detective John Tefft discovered that the suspect was residing in Texas. On Sept. 30, 2008, he and Crime Scene Specialist Dorie Savage traveled to Texas to interview the suspect about the murder. After arriving in Texas, Tefft and Savage obtained a warrant to collect handwriting samples and a DNA reference swab, along with fingerprints and palmprints. Once the suspect was confronted with the physical evidence, he confessed to the homicide but claimed self-defense.

Savage collected major case prints from the suspect, which were compared and identified as the same prints from the cigarette lighter, the Ford Torino and the stereo receiver. DNA from cigarette butts recovered from the crime scene positively matched the suspect's DNA. A warrant was issued for his arrest, and he was detained on Oct. 14, 2008. In December 2009, the suspect faced a jury for this crime that occurred nearly 38 years earlier. However, the judge eventually declared a mistrial. To avoid another trial, the defendant pled guilty to second-degree murder. On April 13, 2010, he was sentenced to five years to life in prison. This was the oldest cold case ever prosecuted in San Diego County.

The Latent Hit of the Year award is presented annually to outstanding latent examiners or officers who solved a major violent crime using the FBI's IAFIS database. The award winner is officially recognized at the International Association for Identification Confer-



Figure 1: In January 1972, investigators located latent prints from a cigarette lighter (resting on the book near the corner of the coffee table) and other collected items, including cigarette butts (located in the bowl partially blocked by a soda can), from the victim's home in San Diego, Calif.



Figure 2: Investigators also found latent prints on the victim's Ford Torino after it was located in Mexico. In January 2008, a fingerprint examiner from the SDPD submitted those latent prints to the IAFIS, which narrowed the search. After further comparisons, the fingerprint examiner identified a match from prints left at the scene to one of the candidates. Once the suspect was located, investigators took a DNA sample from him and positively matched it to the DNA from cigarette butts collected at the crime scene.

ence, and a video about the success story is shared throughout the law enforcement community. Past winners include:

- 2007 recipient Greg Michaud of the Michigan State Police
- 2008 recipient Hoi Lui of the California Department of Justice
- 2009 recipients Pat Robinson and Jocelyn Masten of the Sarasota Police Department, Florida

FBI CJIS Division Assistant Director Daniel Roberts summarized the award's purpose, stating "Those [officers and latent examiners] are unsung heroes, and one of the things we've tried to do with the Latent Hit of the Year is to identify those heroes and give them some recognition for solving crimes — crimes that in some cases go back several decades."

The award winners all accessed the FBI's IAFIS database to help solve a crime. The IAFIS is a national database storing more than 67 million fingerprint subjects, and it grows by 8,000–10,000 prints every day. Maintained by the FBI CJIS Division, the IAFIS is built from local and state law enforcement agencies submitting fingerprint data to the FBI. Detectives and forensic examiners often use the IAFIS as a resource to solve previously unsolvable crimes. With biometric technology expanding beyond fingerprints, the FBI's Next Generation Identification Program will provide improved functionality and expand the IAFIS to include multimodal biometrics, such as iris and palmprint.

More information about the IAFIS can be found on the FBI's website at www.fbi.gov. To submit a success story for award consideration as Latent Hit of the Year, contact the FBI CJIS Division at FBILatentHit@leo.gov. A trailer video provides more detail about the program, and the individual videos showcase the stories behind the major cases solved by the past winners. The videos can be viewed online at: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/fingerprints_biometrics/iafis/iafis_latent_hit_of_the_year. ★