PRESS RELEASE: Cheri Lee GALBREATH

The San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force has identified one of the Jane Doe victims in its investigation of female deaths throughout San Diego County. The nude, decomposing remains found April 13, 1988, in the 10900 block of Black Mountain Rd., Rancho Bernardo, has been identified as Cheri Lee GALBREATH, who was 25 years old at that time. Galbreath was a transient from Florida who had no permanent address in San Diego.

The identification was made by the Cal-ID Fingerprint Identification System utilizing the newly operational San Diego Database. Prior to last week, all Cal-ID requests were routed to the California Department of Justice Database which did not include many local records like Cheri Lee GALBREATH. Task Force members are hopeful that fingerprints from other unidentified victims can be processed with equally positive results.
Introduction:

The San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force began operating as a formal investigative unit on September 1, 1988. During the three months immediately preceding that date, a group of investigators and prosecutors conducted an assessment of the suspected homicides of young women, many of them prostitutes, whose deaths had occurred in the San Diego area since approximately 1985.

This ad hoc working group consisted of detectives from the San Diego Sheriff's Department ("SDSD") and the San Diego Police Department ("SDPD") and members of the San Diego District Attorney's Office. The assessment focused on two primary questions:

1. Was one or more "serial killers" responsible for some or all of the deaths?

2. What approach should be used to address the homicides?

The efforts of this initial working group were reported to the District Attorney, the Sheriff, and the Chief of Police by then-Deputy District Attorney Charles Rogers, Sheriff's Captain Stan Embry, and then-SDPD Captain Dave Worden.

The report related the group's investigative and legal analyses and conclusions, based on an examination of thirty-one suspected killings. In addition, its authors recommended the creation of an inter-agency investigative group to address the homicides. It was recommended the group consist of homicide detectives from the SDSD and the SDPD, vice detectives from the SDPD, and a representative from the Office of District Attorney.

Thereafter, in response to concerns raised in this initial assessment, the District Attorney, the Sheriff, and the Chief of Police formed the San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force. This report
is prepared as the Task Force enters its eighteenth month of formal operation.

The activities of the Task Force are conducted under the operational control of all three agencies and under the immediate direction of a San Diego Sheriff's Lieutenant. Specifically, the SDFD and the SDSD have each designated a captain to act as a coordinator of the Task Force. Likewise, the District Attorney designated a prosecutor to serve in a similar capacity.

The Task Force Coordinators meet on a regular basis. In addition, periodic oral briefings are conducted to apprise the heads of the three member agencies of the status of Task Force affairs. The instant "Status Report to Agency Heads -- Second Formal Report" (hereafter referred to simply as "the instant Report" or "the Report") records important aspects of the Task Force operations and supplements these ongoing but less formal briefings.

Scope of the Instant Report:

The first formal written Status Report to Agency Heads was prepared on March 1, 1989 and covered the first six months of operation of the Task Force.

The instant Report has as its primary focus the intervening eleven months since the March 1, 1989 report. Of necessity, however, some matters contained in the earlier report will receive additional treatment herein.

Like its predecessor, this Report is intended to serve as a two-way communication tool as well as a record of activities of the Task Force. Thus, not only does it report the important events, activities, and theories of the Task Force, but it also provides a framework within which the chief executive of each agency may perform his own analysis and make comments, suggestions and policy directions for the future.

In addition, the instant Report serves one further function not performed by the March, 1989 document. As described hereafter in more detail, this Report addresses the specific questions of whether the Task Force concept continues to be the appropriate approach to the subject homicides and, if so, how long the Task Force should continue to operate.

In performing these three functions, then, the Report reviews the background from which the Task Force originated and the nature of the problems it now faces.
Specifically, the Report addresses the following subjects:

1. Changes in the Composition of the Task Force
2. The Current Investigative Protocol and Philosophy
3. Task Force Accomplishments and Activities to Date
4. An Assessment of the Continuing Need for and Duration of the Task Force

A Caveat -- Limits to the Scope of the Instant Report:

It is not anticipated the instant Report will answer every question or criticism concerning the activities of the Task Force. Clearly, even if the original assessment that several or many of the subject homicides were attributable to one or more "serial killers" is correct, it is also glaringly true those persons have not been identified and brought to justice.

Experience in other parts of the country demonstrates the generally long odds against apprehending persons responsible for committing serial killings in the absence of some stroke of luck.

In a discouraging number of the cases where serial killers have been identified, the suspect first came to official attention as a result of some fortuitous event -- e.g., being stopped by a traffic officer while transporting a victim's body -- and only thereafter was linked by confession, modus operandi and/or forensic evidence with the other killings. (As discussed later, this phenomenon was accorded some weight in the formulation of the methodology and investigative protocol utilized by the San Diego Task Force.)

An examination of the experiences of other cities where serial killers have operated also shows how even vast quantities of law enforcement resources do not necessarily result in solving the case.

A notable example is Seattle's Green River Task Force. At one time that endeavor included the full-time assignment of up to fifteen Special Agents from the FBI and the use of an elaborate "main-frame" computer in addition to the contingent of detectives from local police agencies. In its several years of full-time operation, the Green River Task Force did not produce any convictions on any of the Seattle homicides.
By contrast, the San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force has involved a fraction of those resources. In an era of tight law enforcement budgets and scarce operational dollars, the three member agencies have borne the expenses of the Task Force from their normal budgets. For all agencies, this required borrowing personnel and equipment from other law enforcement functions, which as a consequence had to operate at less than full strength.

Also by contrast, however, the San Diego effort has resulted in the identification and conviction of no less than five persons for attacks on prostitutes.

In each of these cases, the attacks were committed under circumstances that bore substantial or strong similarities to some of those associated with the subject homicides. Three of these five persons are at the present time in prison. In addition, a sixth suspect is in custody awaiting trial for murder in one of the Task Force cases.

While these successes demonstrate the public has been well served by the efforts of the Task Force, the inescapable fact that the primary killer or killers have not yet been identified provides a continuing source of frustration to the investigators. (As explained later, the term "identified" is used advisedly. It is entirely possible one of the persons already prosecuted and convicted is in fact responsible for other of the subject homicides, even though no testimonial or forensic link has been established. One area of planned activity is to re-evaluate those suspects to see if less traditional methods of linking them to other killings emerge.)

It is a reflection of the character and sense of purpose of the Task Force detectives that the inherently difficult nature of such cases provides little solace for the inability thus far to identify the primary killers. Equally to their credit, however, are the facts that investigative efforts continue to be vigorous and that the enthusiasm and morale of the investigators are at an all-time high.

The primary focus of the instant Report, however, is not to simply chronicle the substantial successes of the Task Force, nor to recite the frustrations of the investigative effort.

Instead, this Report is intended to provide a candid and perhaps hard-nosed appraisal of the subject homicides and the benefits (or lack thereof) of continuing to utilize a task force approach to address the unsolved cases.
Changes in the Composition of the Task Force:

Since its formation, the Task Force has undergone a number of changes in personnel. For the most part, these changes have involved only a substitution of one person for another, such that the essential theory of the Task Force as reflected by the composition of its members remains unchanged.

As originally conceived, the Task Force consisted of the full-time commitment of three detectives and a sergeant from the SDSD, four detectives and a sergeant from the SDPD, and a prosecutor from the District Attorney.

Additionally, the SDPD and the SDSD each contributed the administrative and leadership efforts of a captain to act as coordinators, though the designated captains continued to perform other functions with their respective agencies. The designated prosecutor, however, was committed to the Task Force on a full-time basis, serving not only as the third coordinator but as the day-to-day director of the investigative activities.

During the first few months of operation, the need was recognized to have a single individual with peace officer status to act as unit commander of the Task Force. A lieutenant with the SDSD was designated for this function.

It also became apparent that the management and liaison duties and legal advisor functions of the prosecutor/coordinator required the substantially full-time efforts of the individual assigned to that position.

This fact was demonstrated in the fall of 1988 during the first few months of formal existence of the Task Force.

At that time, investigators arrested Blake Raymond Taylor for the attempted murder of an El Cajon Boulevard prostitute. The circumstances of the attack bore substantial similarities to what likely occurred in many of the subject homicides. The prosecution of this one case (CR97387, B42061) required the Deputy District Attorney assigned to the Task Force to be away from management functions for several weeks.

Thereafter, the District Attorney contributed a second prosecutor to the Task Force. In addition, the Chief Deputy District Attorney continued to offer substantial advice and direction to the endeavor.
At different times during the ensuing months, two detectives originally assigned to the Task Force were returned to other duties. In each case, another detective was selected to fill the position, with the result that no functional change occurred.

The District Attorney further increased the participation of his Office in the Task Force by the addition of an investigator to assist in background and intelligence matters related to the investigations. In addition, when one of the Task Force detectives from the SDSD made the career change to become a District Attorney investigator, the District Attorney allowed that person to remain assigned to the Task Force.

One unique feature of the San Diego project was the assignment of two vice detectives to be full-time members of the Task Force.

These detectives were two of the four peace officers provided by the SDPD. Each possessed a strong background of experience with knowledge of the "prostitute culture" from which many of the victims came, that is, the segment of street prostitution conducted near and along El Cajon Boulevard in the City of San Diego.

The use of vice detectives in homicide investigations represents a departure from most other task force efforts around the country, even where the subject victims were primarily prostitutes.

In addition to bringing a background knowledge of the street-prostitution society from which many of the victims came, these detectives made other significant contributions to the Task Force endeavor. They were uniquely skilled in interviewing prostitutes and in surveillance techniques; they had informants who were prostitutes; and they had credibility within the particular prostitute culture. Moreover, their familiarity with the habits and "M.O." of both the prostitutes and their customers provided valuable insights into probable characteristics of the subject killings.

None of the personnel changes that occurred over the duration of the Task Force to date have altered the initial decision to include vice detectives in the endeavor.

Thus, the Task Force initially consisted of the part-time assignment of a captain from each law enforcement agency to act as coordinators, the full-time assignment of eight other persons -- a prosecutor to act as the third coordinator, a sergeant and three homicide investigators from the SDSD, a sergeant and two homicide investigators and two vice investigators from the SDPD.
As of January, 1990, in addition to the two captains, the Task Force consisted of eleven other persons: Two prosecutors (one acting primarily as coordinator and the second as legal advisor and trial prosecutor), a lieutenant from the SDD, a sergeant and two homicide detectives from the SDD, a sergeant and two homicide investigators and two vice investigators from the SDD, and two District Attorney investigators (one performing background and intelligence functions and the other a Sheriff's detective who became a District Attorney investigator).

In mid-January, 1990, one of the prosecutors from the District Attorney's Office left that office to become a judge. The second prosecutor now acts as coordinator.

[Information Redacted]

The current Investigative Protocol and Philosophy:

After the original working group's analysis of the subject homicides was conducted and the Task Force was formalized, an investigative protocol and methodology were developed to address the subject homicides.


In brief, the approach begins with the concept that a "serial killer" is a person who commits multiple or series homicides for what may be called non-traditional motives, i.e., motives other than those associated with organized crime, financial gain, anger or heat of passion, or specific revenge.

Usually, this motive is a psychological one that is uniquely personal to the killer. While it is sometimes said that the victims of a serial killer are chosen "at random," once the personal motives of the killer are understood, it becomes apparent the selection of victims is not random in the true sense of the word, namely, without a plan or purely by chance. It only appears they were randomly selected because without an understanding of the motive there is no immediately apparent link between the victims.

Confronted with a significant number of killings which bore sufficient similarities to justify the working assumption a single
killer had committed them, Task Force detectives elected a method that took into account both prevailing investigative and psychological knowledge and the particular circumstances of the San Diego cases.

First, the development of a psychological profile of the likely killer was considered.

While many of the San Diego cases bore sufficient similarities to warrant the investigative assumption they were committed by a single killer, no highly unique factors were apparent that might provide any specific insight into the killer's personal psychological drives.

This fact is not inconsistent with current knowledge concerning serial killers. While it is true that some serial killers will commit their attacks with highly unique "signature" similarities, this is not always the case. It is generally recognized that some serial killers place greater personal significance on factors other than the actual killing.

Such factors might include, for instance, the selection of the victim, the location of the killing, or the avoidance of detection. They might also include some form of dominative conduct that precedes the killing.

In such instances, the manner of killing may be of less significance to the killer's psychopathy than the acts which preceded the killing. As a consequence, it is not always the case that highly unique factors from which a profile can be drawn will be found on the body or at the site where it is dumped.

These circumstances, coupled with information on profiling obtained from the Green River Task Force (which placed heavy reliance on this technique in connection with at least two persons believed at one time to be suspects), led the San Diego investigators to adopt an approach that did not place primary emphasis on psychological profiling.

A second factor considered was the use of forensic evidence as a means of developing suspect information.

Virtually all of the San Diego killings appear to have been committed at locations other than where the bodies were recovered. In most of the cases, the "dump sites" were remote rural areas. As a consequence, the bodies were often not discovered for substantial periods of time. Decomposition and exposure to the elements
led to the loss or destruction of most traditional sorts of forensic evidence, e.g., fluids, hairs, and fibers.

The inescapable conclusion was that no clear forensic link existed among the killings.

The third consideration involved the transient lifestyle of most street prostitutes. It is common for such persons to move on a "circuit" that takes them from city to city. Usually, the motivating factor for moving on is the accumulation of a sufficient number of prostitution arrests that they face finally being incarcerated on any subsequent arrest.

One result of this is that missing person reports are rare in such cases. Even if the prostitute has friends or associates who might be inclined to make such a report, it is frequently assumed by them or by the police that the hooker's disappearance was occasioned by her simply leaving town.

A further consequence is that it is difficult to go back months later when the body is found and determine where the victim was last seen alive or whom she was with at the time.

Due to these and other factors, the Task Force decided on an approach that would be both proactive and reactive.

The protocol thus adopted would not only follow traditional investigative avenues with respect to the existing cases (the reactive component), but would also devote vigorous investigative effort to cases in which the victim was not in fact killed but survived. If the person responsible for such attacks was identified, it might be possible to work backwards to determine if he committed any of the subject homicides.

Cases involving surviving victims were screened to see if they met a threshold level of similarity to the common factors of the existing homicides. Once this was established, the case would be worked by the Task Force detectives even though it was not a homicide.

Thus, the investigative protocol of the Task Force evolved into a process that followed two primary avenues. The first was the employment of traditional reactive investigative steps to follow all reasonable leads surrounding the killings. The second and proactive approach was to work new cases, including attempted or unsuccessful killings, that were similar to key characteristics of the subject homicides for the purpose of identifying a suspect who could be targeted to see if he had committed the other killings.
Task Force Accomplishments and Activities to Date:

In theory, both the reactive and the proactive components were to be employed simultaneously; that is, the existing cases would be analyzed and investigated to see that all leads were followed at the same time that any new cases which might occur would be worked.

In practice, however, when a new case occurred that fit the Task Force criteria, the commitment of personnel to it frequently caused the reactive endeavors to be temporarily put aside. Moreover, the proactive endeavors consumed the majority of Task Force investigative resources during the first eight months of operation.

Proactive Cases:

Shortly before the formation of the Task Force and during the first six months of its operation, five instances were identified in which male suspects made attacks on prostitutes under circumstances that bore substantial similarity to those believed to have occurred in the subject homicides. In each case the victim survived.

Each case was investigated, and in each case the suspect was identified, arrested, and convicted of felony charges arising from the attacks. Three of these are serving state prison sentences; two received probation and local time. These cases are described in the March, 1989 Status Report.

A sixth case worked in this fashion involved a homicide committed after the formation of the Task Force. The person responsible has been arrested for the murder and is pending trial (People v. Alan Michael Stevens, CR102816, B47313).

Each of these suspects was examined to see if he might be responsible for any of the subject homicides. However, none of them have to date been linked by any of the more obvious methods, i.e., none of them made statements implicating them in other cases, no stash of souvenirs from any of the other cases was found, and no forensic link was established (due primarily to the lack of common forensic links among the subject homicides).

[Information Redacted]
Status Report to Agency Heads
Metropolitan Homicide Task Force
February 7, 1990
Page 11

[Information Redacted]

Donna Gentile:
The body of Donna Gentile was found June 23, 1985, dumped at the edge of a large dirt turn-out area on the west side of Sunrise Highway in East San Diego County. The circumstances surrounding her murder have been an enigma, which continues to be the case at the present time.

Several aspects of the killing are similar to some of the features of other of the homicides under investigation by the Task Force.
In the absence of certain other factors, these similarities might warrant the conclusion Gentile was killed by the same person responsible for some of the other killings.

The other factors, however, belie this conclusion. Some of these involve forensic evidence and inferences drawn therefrom regarding the manner and place of her death.

[Information Redacted]

For the past several months, the Gentile case has received substantial effort by the Task Force detectives.

Karen Wilkening:

One aspect of this effort involved the so-called "Rolodex Madam," Karen Wilkening, who operated an exclusive outcall prostitution enterprise in San Diego for a number of years. In May, 1987, Wilkening's Mission Valley condominium was the subject of a search warrant executed by members of the SDPD Vice Section.

In September, 1987 Wilkening failed to appear at a scheduled date of her preliminary hearing. Her attorney tendered a letter purportedly written by Wilkening to the effect that her life was in danger and she had fled to avoid being killed.

Although Donna Gentile primarily worked the streets and Wilkening's business was an outcall service, indications existed the two prostitutes may have known each other.
Added to this was the extraordinary circumstance of Wilkening's flight. Not only did she flee the prosecution, but she left the country and sought refuge in a place she selected because it had no extradition treaty with the United States.

It is no overstatement to say that this is the stuff of movies rather than real life, and for it to exist in the Wilkening case suggested she had extraordinary reasons to fear for her safety. The Wilkening case was a stone that simply could not be left unturned in the investigation.

The matter was complicated by the completely unforeseen and unsuspected involvement of Wilkening's attorney, Buford Wiley, in her flight. Once it was uncovered, Wiley's criminal involvement could scarcely be ignored, yet it proved to be a distracting and time-consuming "side show" that diverted investigative and prosecutorial efforts from the primary mission.

Wilkening is now serving a prison sentence for both her underlying case and the conspiracy involving her flight. Wiley has been convicted of that same felony conspiracy and has received probation on conditions that include incarceration in work furlough and payment of restitution in the amount of $20,000.00, based on the expenses of re-capturing Wilkening from the Philippines.

Wilkening continues to deny any involvement with or knowledge of Gentile, the murders, or persons possibly connected with them.

[Information Redacted]
Status Report to Agency Heads
Metropolitan Homicide Task Force
February 7, 1990
Page 14

[Information Redacted]

An Assessment of the Continuing Need for and Duration of the Task Force:

The San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force has achieved substantial and notable successes in the nearly eighteen months of its formal existence. Not only have the subject homicides received the attention they deserve, but persons committing felonious assaults on prostitutes have been identified, arrested, convicted, and sentenced to jail or prison.

As earlier noted, however, the main killer or killers have not been identified.

From the outset, investigators have maintained the belief that it is likely a single person killed more than one of the victims in the subject homicides, and moreover that it is possible more than one such person acted in this manner. The March 1, 1989 Status Report acknowledges these conclusions as likely.

These conclusions remain valid today, and in some instances are supported by more evidence than originally was available.

[Information Redacted]

The Continuing Investigative Problem:

The situation may be stated as follows:
(1) There in fact exists a suspected series of murders of young women, many of them prostitutes who worked the El Cajon Boulevard area of the City of San Diego.

(2) It is erroneous to conclude a single suspect committed all or even most of the killings.

(3) However, it is likely one suspect did commit a substantial number of the homicides and suspected homicides.

(4) It is not possible to conclude a single person killed all or most of the subject victims. It is possible more than one killer exists, each acting separately from the other.

[Information Redacted]

(5) The cases are characterized by difficult issues involving the lack of a clear "signature" to provide insights into the killer's motives, a relative lack of forensic clues to link the cases, and the inter-jurisdictional issues raised by the fact the killings or the antecedent kidnapings occurred in the City whereas many of the bodies were dumped in the County.

Additional Factors:

To these conclusions must be added the following propositions, based on the present state of the investigation:

(1) No homicide case has occurred for over a year which can be clearly linked to any of the possible series.

(2) No attempted homicide has been identified as occurring within the past year that matches the threshold criteria of similarity to the subject homicides.

(3) These two facts suggest the serial killer is either:

   a. dead;
   b. incarcerated;
   c. committed to a mental institution;
   d. no longer in San Diego; or
   e. no longer killing people.
(4) Further effort must be devoted to determining if the killer may in fact be one of the persons already identified and prosecuted [Information Redacted] by the Task Force under the proactive component of its methodology; or is deceased.

(5) Frankly, even though the methodology called for a detailed investigation of each person so identified, time and personnel considerations have not permitted this to be done to the extent necessary to conclude the particular person was not involved.

(6) [Information Redacted] Each such person has been convicted and, pursuant thereto, has been the subject of a pre-sentence investigation by the Probation Department. One approach that must not be left undone is the assembly of all background and psychological data available as a result of the probation reports and from other sources, and the analysis of that material by behavioral specialists to see if any one of these persons stands out as a likely suspect for the series murders.

[Information Redacted]

(10) Moreover, recent detailed analyses of the Gentile dump site and of evidence obtained from her body have provided further insight into the likely manner in which the killing took place. This likewise has generated additional leads.
Anticipated Duration of the Task Force:

Nobody involved with the Task Force wants to see the matter conclude as a protracted monument to an investigation that didn't go anywhere. However, it is strongly believed much additional work needs to be done before it can be said the investigators have exhausted all leads that might reasonably be expected to be productive.

What, then, should be considered likely to be the continued duration of the Task Force?

At all points where this question has been considered up to the present time, the following two-fold conclusion has been reached:

(1) It is neither productive nor possible to fix a date certain for termination of the Task Force;

(2) As long as investigative avenues exist which are reasonably likely to be productive, the Task Force should continue.

It is believed an assessment of the present state of the subject cases and of the Task Force efforts with respect to them indicates these conclusions continue to be valid and proper. In addition, they embody good leadership and management principles.

From a leadership perspective, setting a fixed conclusion date is destructive of morale which, as indicated, is at present high. To have a termination "date-certain" looming ever closer puts people both within and outside the Task Force in a "wind-down mode" as far as investigative efforts are concerned.

From a management perspective, it is in fact possible to make a realistic assessment of whether productive avenues of investigation remain.

The presentation of pending questions such as those set forth above is one way to do so, provided it is done in such a way as to not present an undue risk of compromising the investigation or of undermining the certain degree of independence heretofore accorded the Task Force in conducting its investigations. This can be done in the oral bi-monthly Chiefs' briefings, as well as by occasional written Status Reports such as this one.
Conclusion:

It is foreseeable as some of the avenues set forth above are explored, others will surface. However, it is also likely the number of these will diminish until the point is reached when either the cases are solved or a candid appraisal leads to the conclusion that substantially all that can be done has been done.

When either point is reached, the public and the member agencies that make up the Task Force will have been well served.

Bonnie M. Dumanis  Stan H. Embry  David A. Hall
Deputy District Attorney  Captain, SDSD  Captain, SDPD