



HFSC Forensic Audio/Video Unit, HPD Homicide Collaborate to Solve Case

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collaborative, quick work by the Houston Forensic Science Center's Forensic Audio/Video Unit and the Houston Police Department's Homicide Division led recently to the speedy arrest of a murder suspect.

On August 18 the owner of an auto body shop was found decapitated in his workplace. An HPD homicide investigator noticed security cameras in the building and called Megan Timlin, an HFSC audio/video analyst, in the middle of the night to see if she might be able to recover the video. Ms. Timlin, working just a few feet from the body, successfully recovered video that depicted the entire murder. Using the video, the HPD investigator identified a suspect, issued an arrest warrant and alerted the media so the community could be made aware. Police arrested the suspect a few hours later.

"Without Megan's help, there is no telling how this case would have turned out," Alexander Vinogradov, the HPD homicide investigator, said in an emailed note.

This case, however, is only one of many in which HFSC's on-call forensic video analysts are able to arrive at a scene and provide HPD officers with information that could potentially assist them in an investigation.

"This serves as an example of the ongoing efforts by the police department and HFSC to ensure quality service to the citizens of Houston," said HPD Assistant Chief Don McKinney of the Criminal Investigations Command. "Such cooperation is imperative to the collection of evidence, thus ensuring justice can be served in a transparent, forthright and expeditious manner."

HFSC's Multimedia Digital Evidence Section recently met international accreditation standards, and it follows recognized scientific protocols.

Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC's vice president and chief operations officer, said the Center is working closely with HPD and other stakeholders to ensure the justice system is properly served by the forensic agency.

"Our goal is to provide the right answer at the right time," Dr. Stout said.

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC currently operates in eight forensic disciplines.

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