



November 29, 2022

G.O.L.D. Unit Utilizes Genealogical Testing to Identify John Doe #147 for the 1997 Sexual Assault of a Nine-Year-Old Boy in Brooklyn

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office's (CCPO) G.O.L.D. Unit (Genetic Operations Linking DNA) has identified suspect John Doe #147, Dennis Gribble, 72, for the 1997 sexual assault of a nine-year-old boy in Brooklyn.

"I would like to thank our G.O.L.D. Unit and all of our agency partners that assisted in finally bringing justice to the victim in this truly horrific case," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "I would especially like to thank Dr. Lewis Maddox and his team at the Ohio BCI's DNA lab in Richfield led by Kristen Slaper for working tirelessly to solve these cases. This case hits especially close to home as I was a long-time resident of this neighborhood. I look forward to continuing to bring justice and closure to the victims of all of these cold cases."

In 2019 and 2020, the CCPO's Sexual Assault Kit Task Force (SAKTF)* was awarded grants from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance SAKI program. Part of that funding helped launch the office's G.O.L.D. Unit in October 2020. The G.O.L.D. Unit contracted with genealogy vendor Gene by Gene for a pilot project that included genealogical searches for 20 DNA profiles connected to cold case sexual assaults. In 2021 and 2022, the G.O.L.D. Unit was awarded additional BJA SAKI grants to continue genealogical testing of sexual assault cold cases and additional profiles were submitted.

John Doe #147

On August 8, 1997, the 9-year-old male victim was walking alone around the woods near North Amber Drive and Plainfield Avenue in Brooklyn. The victim saw Dennis Gribble and Gribble said his son was riding around on a dirt bike and that he needed help finding a gas can. Gribble led the victim further into the woods and told the victim to lie down on his stomach. He then climbed on top of the victim and sexually assaulted him. Brooklyn Police Department responded to the scene and the victim was transported to a nearby hospital where sexual assault kit evidence was collected.

Dennis Gribble's DNA did not produce any matches in CODIS. Gribble's DNA profile – unknown at the time – was then indicted as "John Doe #147" to ensure that the statute of limitations did not expire. John Doe #147 was charged with the following:

- **One count of Rape**

The CCPO and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's DNA lab (BCI), reviewed the DNA evidence in 2021 for potential forensic genetic genealogy. The DNA profile for John Doe #147 was submitted to Gene by Gene, where investigative genetic genealogists were able to connect John Doe #147's DNA profile to that of Dennis Gribble.



Investigators then obtained Gribble's DNA and sent it to BCI to be tested. The tests confirmed that the DNA in the victim's sexual assault kit evidence matched that of Gribble. The original John Doe #147 indictment was amended to reflect his true name as the defendant.

***SAKTF / G.O.L.D. Unit History**

Since its inception, the Task Force has completed over 7,200 investigations that have resulted in over 850 defendants indicted, the highest number of any SAKTF in the country. The number of indictments includes over 900 victims as several defendants are convicted or alleged serial offenders. Of those cases, the Task Force has secured over a 93% conviction rate with offenders' average prison sentence being approximately 10 years.

As the original 7,026 investigations neared completion, the CCPO contacted the Cleveland Division of Police (CPD) Sex Crimes Unit who indicated there was a need for further investigation on sexual assault kits that have been tested by the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office (CCMEO) between 2012 and 2019. The G.O.L.D. Unit was formed to conduct follow-up investigations and review unknown DNA profiles to determine if they may be eligible for additional testing with new technology. The Unit's work includes the cold case sexual assault project, potential genealogical testing of cold case sexually motivated homicides, and continuing the Lawfully Owed DNA project. To date, 29 DNA profiles of indicted rapists have been submitted and we have now solved five cases using genealogy.

The SAKTF / G.O.L.D. Unit is led by the CCPO and includes CPD, BCI, CCMEO, Cleveland State University, and the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center.