

## OPINION

# Memphis and Nashville will be safer with full-time cold-case crime units | Opinion

Jim Adcock, Guest Columnist    Published 6:00 p.m. CT Nov. 26, 2018

*Cities with dedicated units have a higher rate of solving unsolved crimes than those that still do it part-time.*



(Photo: Getty Images/Wavebreak Media)

The FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) for 2017 was published in late September. Overall, violent crime dropped.

Good news of course, but nothing was mentioned about the mounting number of unresolved homicides and the status of the cold case crisis that exists for the period 1980-2017.

Total accumulation in the USA exceeds 248,993 while in Memphis the figure is over 1,800 and Nashville it is over 1,340.

As we compare the UCR homicide data for 2016 and 2017 we find that in 2016 Memphis had 196 homicides and reported a clearance/solve rate of 75 cases for 38.8 percent.

In 2017 they dropped to 181 homicides and increased their clearances to 100 for a 55.2 percent clearance rate.

Nashville, in 2016, reported 81 homicides solving 54 for 66.67 percent. But in 2017 they jumped to 110 homicides and solved 68 for 61.8 percent.

Please note that the national clearance rate in 2016 was 59.4 percent while in 2017 it went up to 61.6 percent.

Nashville stayed close to the national average but Memphis was below.

But the question that still looms over us is the rising number of unresolved homicides in these two cities and how these departments are addressing the problem.

Memphis has two detectives and soon to be two additional personnel working cold cases but on a part time basis while Nashville has five to seven detectives doing the same thing, also part time. The problem is that neither has a dedicated unit to address only cold unresolved homicides.

## Cities should take recommendations seriously

There is no question that the steps being taken to combat the problem are worthy of acknowledging but both Memphis and Nashville fall short of what the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) Best Practices guide (to be published late 2018) is recommending they should be doing.

Quite simply that is having a "dedicated" cold case unit is the best way to achieve maximum effectiveness. And, from a personal side, I have given both Memphis and Nashville a sound and proven protocol to follow that will not only satisfy most of the NIJ Best Practices guide recommendations but will also pro

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The question is will they take the recommendations seriously?

We know this all works as exemplified by Charlotte, North Carolina where they have had a dedicated cold case unit since 2004 that is staffed today with nine unpaid volunteers and four detectives.

According to the Uniform Crime Reports their rate of solving homicides from 2004 to 2017 was more than 73.0 percent significantly (about 15 percent) above both mid-south cities named in this editorial for the same time frame. In 2017 they achieved an unbelievable 90 percent clearance rate. We can and should learn from others.

Lastly, I'm not saying the mid-south cities won't have some successes with their present configurations because anything they do now over what they were doing, is better and a step forward. But without a dedicated unit in place, it is not enough!

If they really want to solve more of these cases that we know will in turn help to gain/regain public confidence and raise the department's overall homicide clearances then follow the protocol and create/sustain a dedicated cold case unit. This process will also help to reduce violent crime.

As a non-profit corporation in the Mid-South I have offered not only my pro bono cold case and homicide investigation expertise and training, but also will eventually be able to provide funds to help offset some of the costs associated with cold case endeavors.

These departments need our assistance for a safer Mid-South.

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**Jim Adcock** (Photo: Jim Adcock)

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