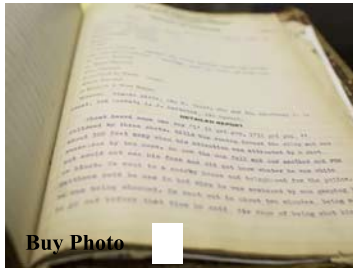


Opinion | Do we have a 'cold case crisis'?

Jim Adcock, Guest columnist

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(Photo: Brad Vest/The Commercial Appeal)

Between 1980 and 2016, the U.S. accumulated over 242,355 cold cases (unlike in Memphis, those numbers exceed 1,500).

Considering that in 2016 the rate of solving homicides nationwide was at its lowest in 20 years, these unsolved cases are increasing each year.

According to a study by the Murder Accountability Project, there is a direct correlation between the number of homicide incidents and a police department's failure to solve others.

In other words, as clearance rates go down, the number of homicide incidents going without answers, justice is not being served, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent on investigations.

Only 18 percent of all police agencies that have cold cases have a dedicated Cold Case Unit where detectives are concentrated on solving these cases.

Since April 2015, I have been a contributing member of the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) Cold Case Working Group, which should be published in the fall of 2018.

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In the latest draft of this document it clearly states that we have a "cold case crisis" that becomes more critical as each immediate attention. It further reflects that having a dedicated Cold Case Unit is not a luxury but rather a necessity.

Why is this all happening?

First, policing today is about the present and the future with little attention to the past -- unless a family member knocks Research shows us that picking up a case for review because someone is asking questions versus having a dedicated on a regular basis are rarely solved.

Second, as in Memphis, many police agencies are suffering large manpower loses.

Third, there is a lack of funds to support a specialized initiative like a dedicated Cold Case Unit. They are basically charged maintain security and protect their communities the best they can.

Agencies with a significant number of unresolved homicides (Memphis, for example, just do not have the manpower no dedicated unit.

What these agencies don't realize is that investing in the process of solving cold cases in conjunction with the hot case they are taking criminals off the streets who we know are committing additional crimes that are costing us/them, directly dollars to investigate each additional crime.

I started a new nonprofit called the Mid-South Cold Case Initiative (<https://www.ms-coldcaseinitiative.com/>) (MSCCI). I goal is to use donated funds to help the Memphis Police Department (MPD) solve some of the 1,500-plus cold cases th

Many agencies that did not have a Cold Case Unit applied for/received government cold case grant funds, then initiated cases. But when the money ran out, the units were dismantled. Money talks.

The MSCCI subscribes to the belief that working cold cases with a dedicated unit will:

- Help to serve justice
- Provide some answers to the families

- Restore and inspire more confidence in our police and the justice system
- Provide a safer community by taking bad actors off the streets who are committing more crime which will u thousands of dollars

As a result, the MSCCI, upon request from a police agency that has a dedicated cold case unit, can request funds to:

- Augment the salary to acquire crime analysts in the cold case unit
- Augment reward fund levels to CrimesStoppers (<http://crimestopmem.org/>) for homicides and cold cases
- Purchase equipment such as computers, programs, printers, scanners, etc. as needed for the cold case ur
- Pay for expedited forensic services from a certified forensic laboratory (presently it takes them 10-12 mont state crime laboratory)
- Provide advanced training on the nuances of dealing with cold cases, staged crime scenes and behavioral homicides
- Provide funds to cover travel by cold case detectives to interview key witnesses versus asking another age them because they don't have the travel funds

Other requests may be considered on a case by case basis.

Our cold case crisis is only going to get worse if we do not find innovating ways to ebb the flow of unresolved homicide seriously operating a dedicated Cold Case Unit. There is no other answer, the less we solve the more incidents we ha

Dr. Jim Adcock, a retired Army Supervisory Special Agent, is president and founder of the Mid-South Cold Case Initiati coldcaseinitiative.com/.



Jim Adcock (Photo: Jim Adcock)

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