

DNA sought on cigarettes, drink can - Murder probe fans out like 'spider web'

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Analysts were processing evidence at a furious pace Wednesday in an expanding investigation into the slayings of the husband and mother of a federal judge.

Technicians were working to find genetic material on cigarette butts, a beverage can and other items found at the Edgewater home of U.S. District Judge Joan H. Lefkow, sources close to the case said.

In the urgent effort to identify a suspect in the 2-day-old case, investigators were testing a glove found near the home and the window that was broken to gain entry to the home.

Some investigators are pinning their hopes on a fingerprint found on that broken window.

Seeking more help from the public, police late Wednesday released sketches based on a witness' report of seeing two men in a car parked near the home Monday.

The investigation into the slayings of attorney Michael F. Lefkow, 64, and Donna G. Humphrey, 89, was fanning out "like a spider web," one source said.

Although investigators acknowledge they have neither a motive nor a suspect, the killings have rocked the judiciary because of the stark possibility that they were carried out in retribution for a ruling by Judge Lefkow.

Lefkow and her surviving family members were under the protection of U.S. marshals Wednesday in an undisclosed location.

Investigators were looking at all of her pending cases, and at anyone she ever convicted or ruled against in federal court.

Someone who sympathizes with white supremacist Matthew Hale remained the leading area of interest, investigators said.

In 2004, Hale was convicted of soliciting his security chief to kill Judge Lefkow after she enforced the decision of an appeals court that ruled against Hale in a copyright infringement case.

As FBI agents focused on white supremacist groups, a federal grand jury was convened to issue subpoenas.

Chicago police, meanwhile, continued to process the physical evidence around the scene.

Sources said a possible DNA profile had been isolated from a cigarette butt left in the kitchen sink of the home, and efforts were ongoing to match it to profiles in a nationwide database of convicted felons.

Any isolated DNA profile could be plugged into a national database of more than 1.5 million convicted felons, investigators said, and perhaps point to the person who apparently crept into the judge's home in broad daylight Monday through a basement window.

That window was broken, investigators have said, and a shard of glass on which the fingerprint was found has been shipped to the FBI laboratory in Virginia.

The entire wooden frame was also pulled from that window as investigators scoured it for trace evidence or signs of pry marks, investigators said.

Chicago police detectives were examining video from street surveillance cameras for some distance in every direction from the Lefkow home, sources said. Detectives were searching for images of two men in a red car that one witness in the neighborhood said he saw, or of a man seen by another witness walking near the home Monday.

Also being collected was videotape from the security cameras in convenience and liquor stores for blocks around the home, investigators said.

'Point-blank' wounds

Investigators Wednesday were considering at least the possibility that the gunman could have thought Humphrey was Judge Lefkow, a source said.

Sources said the fatal shots to both victims were "point-blank" wounds in the forehead.

Both were shot in the basement room where they were found, sources said. But investigators Wednesday said they had recovered blood evidence on the main floor of the house, suggesting Humphrey may have suffered her first gunshot wound in a hallway on that level. Detectives have noted blood spattering on a wall on the first floor, sources close to the probe said, and at least a partial trail of blood down the basement steps.

Humphrey and Lefkow suffered gunshot wounds to the head and chest, authorities have said.

Investigators recovered two .22-caliber shells in the house late Monday, which were being analyzed. A source said there were a total of four gunshot wounds, suggesting the killers retrieved two other casings.

The sketches released Wednesday night depicted two men who a witness said were in the car at the north end of the Lefkows' block during the day before the judge discovered the bodies. Police Chief of Detectives James Molloy did not call them suspects, saying only that police wanted to speak to them.

Investigators were continuing to weigh the account of the witness, who has told police and federal agents he saw the two men smoking and drinking from a can in a car.

Cigarette butts and the can being tested were found near where the car might have been parked, according to the witness' memory, sources said, with technicians "bagging everything" found in the area. Other cigarette butts found around the home's exterior may have been dropped by one of the Lefkows' daughters, who investigators have said sometimes smokes outside the house.

Investigators said the cigarettes found outside the home near the street appeared to have Japanese letters on them, while the cigarette in the sink had burned down too far to immediately determine its brand.

Evidence beneath window

Also collected was a piece of cloth or plastic laid beneath the window, which is believed to have been the point of entry for the attacker. The intruder or intruders may have used the sheet of material to prevent making footprints in soft ground beneath the window.

But investigators did discover a bloody footprint inside the home, which may have been at least partly cleaned. A mop believed to have been used to clean blood was found in the home as well, sources said.

"The way the investigation is shaping up is the Chicago [police] guys are focusing on the crime scene--I haven't seen a crime scene processed like this in more than a decade," said a source close to the probe.

Under the lead of federal agents, task force investigators "are focusing on the white supremacists," locating persons of interest and conducting interviews, sources said.

A number of subpoenas have been issued to white supremacy organizations, for phone records and other documents, investigators said.

Sources Wednesday said they do not believe a "suspicious" phone call made to the Lefkow house on Sunday has any bearing on the investigation. Caller ID in the house suggested it was originating from a correctional facility, but investigators said they now believe it was made from a phone inside a division at the Cook County Jail.

The call, which was being called coincidental, likely was an attempt by an inmate to work a popular jail phone scam. The Cook County sheriff's office in September issued a public warning that inmates were calling numbers randomly in an attempt to trick area residents into forwarding call billing between the inmate and a third party to their own phones.

The task force formed to handle the investigation is working around the clock in two 12-hour shifts.

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Caption: PHOTOS 4

PHOTO (color): A police detective talks with an officer in the alley behind Judge Joan Lefkow's home, where her husband and mother were slain. Tribune photo by John Lee. PHOTO: Sketches of men in car Police described one man as white, in his mid-20s, 5 feet 8 to 6 feet tall, with strawberry blond hair and a medium build.

PHOTO: Sketches of men in car The other is described as white, from 50 to 60, 5 feet 10 to 6 feet tall, with hazel eyes and a large build. He wore green coveralls, a black cap and gray or green coat. PHOTO (color): A favorite hat of Michael Lefkow sits in his office. Attorney William Spielberger (right) shared office space with the slain lawyer. Tribune photo by Chuck Berman.

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