

Lefkow case gets TV aid - Authorities hope 'Most Wanted' can help generate clues

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The head of the Chicago Police Department hopes a TV show will produce new leads and crucial clues in the investigation into the slaying of a federal judge's family.

Police Supt. Philip J. Cline said Sunday that he believes an "America's Most Wanted" broadcast Saturday night about the killings of the husband and mother of U.S. District Judge Joan H. Lefkow could result in a break in the case.

"We're hoping that having it on 'America's Most Wanted' ... will help us out," Cline said in an interview at a fundraising event. "We're looking for that one tip that will break this case open."

Lefkow found her husband Michael, 64, and her mother, Donna Humphrey, 89, shot to death Monday night in the basement of their Edgewater home.

As of late Sunday afternoon, Chicago police had received 606 calls with information about the case, police spokesman David Bayless said. Chicago police released composite sketches Wednesday of two men seen sitting in a car near the Lefkow home around the time of the killings.

The FBI has interviewed more than 100 people, including many known white supremacists, and Friday offered a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the arrests of the persons responsible. There have been no new leads in the investigation, FBI spokesman Ross Rice said Sunday.

Also on Sunday, police clarified witnesses' accounts of seeing men near the Lefkow house. Witnesses saw one man who appeared to be in his 50s on foot near the house and two men in a parked car, Bayless said. A witness could only provide a description of one of the men in the car, who was described as in his 20s.

Laboratory technicians have been trying to find genetic material on cigarette butts, a beverage can and other items found at the Lefkow home. The most promising piece of evidence is a fingerprint on glass from a broken window.

The TV broadcast Saturday night sparked 25 tips to the show's hot line, spokesman Avery Mann said. "Viewer response in the Lefkow case has been excellent," he said.

But, thus far, no single tip has provided information to break the case, investigators said.

Viewer response to crimes portrayed on "America's Most Wanted" ranges from zero to several hundred calls, depending on the case and the number of times it has aired.

"We've had cases solved with one tip alone, and others with over a hundred," Mann said. "We've solved cases like this in the past where there are just sketches of potential suspects."

The Lefkow case is daunting. Mann said that cases in which a suspect is not named, or only sketches of suspects are available, tend to be more difficult and have a lower success rate.

Mann said it is possible that the episode about the Lefkow case could be aired again, especially if there is new evidence or additional information that can be disclosed. In its 17-year-history, "America's Most Wanted" has helped to capture 830 fugitives and recovered 41 missing children, according to the show.

The TV show has a multifaceted reporting system and works closely with case investigators. After a broadcast, viewers can call or e-mail the show.

In the Lefkow case, two federal marshals, an FBI agent and a Chicago police investigator were at the show's Washington, D.C., headquarters to review the information that was sent in by viewers.

This is an unusually high number of investigators, Mann said. Typically, one or two investigators review tips, he noted.

In the course of interviewing people affiliated with white supremacist groups, a handful of them have been confrontational with authorities, a source said.

These people have been arrested for minor offenses related to the confrontations. At least three people have been held briefly at the Belmont Area station, but no one has faced charges, sources said. A small number of people have been held across the country for similar minor offenses, mainly for being confrontational with police, the source said.

The investigation has focused on followers of white supremacist Matthew Hale , 33, who was convicted last year of soliciting the murder of Joan Lefkow after she had found Hale in contempt of court for refusing to comply with a copyright-infringement lawsuit. Investigators have also made an attempt to speak to everyone who attended Hale's trial and anyone connected with a hate group, a source said.

Caption: PHOTOS 2

PHOTOS: Police have released these sketches of men reportedly seen near the Lefkow home.

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