



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021  
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### **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PARTNERSHIP FINDS MORE THAN 300 UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS THROUGH FINGERPRINT ANALYSIS**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs today announced an important milestone reached through a partnership between OJP’s National Institute of Justice and the FBI. The collaborative effort to match unidentified persons’ fingerprints to biometric and criminal history information made its 300<sup>th</sup> identification last month.

“This latest milestone affirms the essential role that forensic science plays in solving crimes and ensuring public safety,” said NIJ Acting Director Jennifer Scherer. “Our partnership with the FBI continues to yield impressive results in the face of daunting investigative challenges, establishing identities out of the thinnest of evidence and delivering long-awaited answers to families of the missing, often after years of anguish and uncertainty.”

In February 2017, NIJ’s National Missing and Unidentified Persons (NamUs) program and the FBI Laboratory began searching unidentified persons’ fingerprints through the FBI’s Next Generation Identification System (NGI). The NGI system is the world’s largest and most efficient electronic repository of biometric and criminal history information and enables analysis of poor-quality entries in the FBI’s fingerprint database, allowing more focused searches and increasing the likelihood of identification, even with prints that have been searched many times in the past. NamUs is currently the only national database of cases involving unidentified persons, with currently over 13,638 cases.

FBI Acting Assistant Director Eric Pokorak of the Laboratory Division said, “The FBI Laboratory is proud of our partnership with NIJ, the critical forensic support we provide to NAMUS, and through that collaboration offering a degree of solace to the loved ones of the missing.”

Since then, 2,647 fingerprint cards have been examined, resulting in the current total of 312 identifications, many of which are cold case homicide investigations. Of that number, 34 were homicide victims, and another 83 are undetermined cases which may be homicides.

In one recent case, an unidentified person’s prints were of such poor quality that they could not previously be submitted for fingerprint searches. Using NGI, the decedent was identified as a migrant worker, and the process of finding Next of Kin was started. Had the card not been uploaded into NamUs, the person would have gone unidentified indefinitely.

More information about NamUs and the FBI Latent Print Support Unit can be found at [www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov) and <https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/latent-print>, respectively.

Information about the National Institute of Justice is available at [www.nij.gov](http://www.nij.gov).

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The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, advance racial equity in the administration of justice, assist victims and enhance the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).