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DEFENDANT INDICTED FOR 2007 COLD CASE BLUDGEONING AND STRANGULATION OF RIDGEWOOD WOMAN

Advanced DNA Testing Helped Lead to Arrest; Faces up to 25 Years to Life in Prison, if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Javier Segarra was indicted by a grand jury for murder in the death of 51-year-old Martha Vega of Ridgewood. The victim was found on September 10, 2007, lying in a pool of blood in the bathroom of her Cornelia Street home. The defendant's mother and the victim knew one another.

The defendant was identified through investigative genetic genealogy (IGG), making this the third arrest in unsolved murder cases since the inception of the District Attorney's Cold Case Unit where IGG played a critical role in the case.

District Attorney Katz said: "For almost two decades, Martha Vega's murder went unsolved, but she was never forgotten. Advances in DNA technology helped identify the suspect who has now been indicted for murder. I empathize with families who struggle, sometimes for years, without knowing what happened to their loved ones. We are committed to holding offenders accountable, no matter how long it takes. I thank members of my Cold Case Unit and our partners at the NYPD Homicide Squad for their work on this case."

Segarra, 46, of South Carolina, was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with murder in the second degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Michael Gaffey remanded the defendant and ordered him to return to court on January 15, 2027. He faces up to 25 years to life in prison, if convicted.

Segarra was apprehended November 4 in Newberry County, South Carolina, and extradited to Queens today to face the charges against him.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, on September 10, 2007, at approximately 6 p.m., Martha Vega was discovered by police unresponsive in a pool of blood in the bathroom of her apartment on Cornelia Street.

There were no signs of forced entry into the apartment.

The cause of death was determined to be blunt force trauma to Vega's head as well as compression of the neck. The wounds were consistent with the use of a hammer as a weapon.

NYPD crime scene detectives collected blood swabs from the location. The office of Chief Medical Examiner examined the swabs and was able to determine a DNA profile that matched the victim and an additional unknown male DNA profile, suggesting the attacker had been injured and was bleeding. That profile was entered into local, state, and national databases with negative results.

In May 2022, the Queens District Attorney's Office and the NYPD Homicide Squad sought assistance from a private laboratory to help generate leads to the unknown suspect's identity by using investigative genetic genealogy.

In July 2022, the laboratory, Othram Inc., used advanced DNA testing to produce a comprehensive genealogical profile from the suspect's blood left at the scene. The genealogical profile was then uploaded to public databases.

The District Attorney's Cold Case Unit built a family tree to identify possible suspects, or relatives of a suspect, using information from public databases. That investigation led to the identification of Segarra.

The defendant's mother and Vega were friends and he sometimes did odd jobs for Vega.

On May 28, 2026, detectives from the NYPD Queens District Attorney Squad traveled to Newberry County, South Carolina, and conducted surveillance of Segarra and ultimately collected a discarded cup from him.

The Office of Chief Medical Examiner analyzed the cup and produced a DNA profile. DNA testing confirmed that the profile matched the unknown male DNA profile developed from blood evidence left at the scene by the suspect and DNA recovered from under the victim's fingernails.

The investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Karen L. Ross, Chief of the District Attorney's Cold Case Unit and Deputy Chief of the Homicide Bureau and Detective Joseph Bey of the NYPD's Queens Homicide Squad under the supervision of Lt. Joseph Muller and Sgt. Matthew Starrantino. Assisting in the investigation were Detectives Robert Patterson and Fabrizio Randazzo from the NYPD Queens District Attorney Squad under the supervision of Lt. Christopher Kehoe.

Assistant District Attorney Ross and Assistant District Attorney Gregory Lasak are prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney John Kosinski, Homicide Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Chief Assistant District Attorney Shawn Clark.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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