



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2019
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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HONORS TEXAS OFFICERS WITH MISSING CHILDREN'S LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARD

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today honored 10 Texas-based law enforcement officers who rescued two sisters abducted from their home in Round Rock, Texas.

Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General Ed O'Callaghan, Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt Dummermuth, and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Administrator Caren Harp presented the officers with the 2019 Missing Children's Law Enforcement Award during the Justice Department's National Missing Children's Day ceremony. This award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of law enforcement officers who have made a significant investigative or program contribution to the safety of children.

On New Year's Eve 2017, officers responded to a homicide scene in Round Rock, Texas. A woman had been murdered, and her 7- and 14-year-old daughters were missing. After an AMBER Alert was issued, credible sightings of the girls were also reported in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, which led officials to issue alerts in all three states.

Through a combination of digital evidence, forensic processing, cell phone analysis, interviews, surveillance images and tips from the public, investigators discovered the suspect's location. On Jan. 3, 2018, the sisters were found unharmed when the suspect was apprehended during a traffic stop near La Veta, Colorado—700 miles away from their home. The suspect had a long criminal history, including charges of attempted murder, rape, and child pornography. He was arrested and extradited to Texas, where he was subsequently convicted on two federal counts of kidnapping, one count of transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and one count of travel with intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct. He was sentenced May 21, in Austin, Texas, to life in federal prison.

Award recipients include officers from Round Rock, Austin, and Laredo, Texas.

Officers from the Round Rock Police Department:

- Sergeant Darin Bayles
- Detective Bernardo Villegas
- Lieutenant Robert Drawbaugh

- Crime Scene Specialist Kerie McKown
- Detective Robert Watts (Retired)
- Detective Kevin Bender

Officers from the FBI San Antonio Field Office, Austin Resident Agency:

- Special Agent Sean M. Mullen
- Special Agent Jacob E. Baillie

Officer from the FBI San Antonio Field Office, Laredo Resident Agency (now with the FBI's Honolulu Field Office):

- Special Agent Andrew Masters

Officer from the Texas Ranger Division, Texas Department of Public Safety, Austin:

- Ranger Gary Phillips

“This collaborative team of law enforcement officers from multiple cities and states worked around the clock during this four-day manhunt,” said Administrator Caren Harp. “The Department of Justice praises their swift efforts in rescuing these children and bringing this individual to justice.”

The Department also recognized seven other law enforcement officers for their investigations of child sexual predators who sexually assaulted children, or created or viewed child pornography, as well as two firefighters who found a lost six-year-old boy. Harp also recognized Madison Dozier, a fifth grader at Reiley Elementary School in Alexandria, Kentucky, as the 20th winner of the National Missing Children's Day poster contest.

Additional information about [National Missing Children's Day](#) is available online.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth, provides federal leadership, grants and resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal justice system. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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