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Similar clues seen in kidnap, slayings

Austin police outline developments in hunt for yogurt shop murderers

Continued from A1
want to question Alberto Cortes, 22, Ricardo A. Hernandez, 26, and Carlos Saavedra, 23, whom Tarrant County grand jury indicted March 23 on a separate case on charges of aggravated kidnapping. They are accused of abducting a woman outside an Austin neighborhood and sexually assaulting her in a car while traveling to San Antonio, where she was released.

The indictment was issued when it was issued because police thought they knew where the three were and did not want the suspects to know they were being sought, said Sgt. John Jones, lead investigator in the yogurt shop killings.

On Wednesday, the indictment was made public, and police sought help from the media to find the three suspects, America's Most Wanted, a television show that reports about fugitives and their alleged crimes, is scheduled to air a 15-minute segment tonight about the three kidnap suspects in the United States and Mexico, Jones said.

Hernandez and Saavedra grew up in an area near Mexico City, and police are not sure where Cortes is from, Jones said. The suspects have friends in Mexico, Texas or Southern California, Mooney said.

Police and the parents of the slain girls hope for tips after the 'America's Most Wanted' program.

Parents of the slain girls and police hope for tips after the America's Most Wanted program. A 48 Hours television show reported in March that a suspect in the kidnapping resembled a man seen at the yogurt shop. That helped investigators identify the kidnap suspects, Jones said.

"Getting those pictures out there, we'll find them. Everyone watches America's Most Wanted," said the Harrison sisters' mother, Barbara Jones. "At least we'll get them off the streets and put that get to rest and maybe our girls, too. It won't bring my girls back, but I can only hope justice will be served."

Police said the link in the two investigations developed this way: Mooney had composite sketches of the three kidnap suspects, but she did not know their names. She recognized one of them in March from a drawing of the man seen outside the yogurt shop. A caller who saw the 48 Hours show gave police the name of one kidnap suspect. That name was key to identifying all three men charged with the November abduction.

The FBI has issued warrants charging the three with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. "If it's determined that they are in Mexico, we would have the appropriate authorities help locate them," said Joe Hester, an FBI spokesman in San Antonio. "But they are Mexican nationals, their constitution prohibits extraditing them."

Saavedra was deported from Houston to Mexico in September 1991 after the Texas Department of Corrections released him on parole, according to prison records. Cortes was sentenced in September 1990 to five years in prison for burglary and theft, and his parole ends in 1995, parole records state. Saavedra was arrested in Dallas in November 1991 on a charge of unlawfully carrying a weapon. Hill County records state. A warrant was issued there in February for his arrest.

The woman who was kidnapped and sexually assaulted in November said Saavedra, nicknamed the Terminator, was the most aggressive of the three. She said Cortes "looked a bit like" the drawing of the man seen outside the yogurt shop.

All of the kidnap suspects have brown eyes and black hair. Cortes has a medium build and is 5-foot-4. Saavedra — who is also known as Purfio Villa — Saavedra, Carlos Martinez and Purfio Villa — has a stocky build and is 5-foot-4. Hernandez has a medium build and is 5-foot-4. His sisters are Ricardo Sanchez, Ricardo Hernandez, Albarro and El Brojo, which translates from Spanish as "the witch."

Hernandez's friends told police he was nicknamed El Brojo because of his hooked nose, Jones said. Anyone with information about the three can call 480-5113.

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Protein that halts rejection in mice may aid human organ transplants

By Paul Rector
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tests show that a new protein can trick the mouse immune system into accepting instead of attacking transplanted tissue. Experts say the discovery may lead to organ transplants without a lifetime of anti-rejection drugs.

Jeffrey Blomstone, leader of a research team at the University of Chicago Medical Center, said the protein blocks a key signal that mouse cells in the blood, called T-cells, must receive before they attack transplanted tissue. Without the signal, an organ transplant is tolerated by the body, he said.

While the new protein can ease the body's acceptance of transplanted tissue, the rest of the immune system is left intact and able to fight off germs and diseases. A report on the study is to be published today in the journal Science.

In the Chicago study, a group of diabetic mice received transplants of human pancreatic tissue. Half of the mice also were treated with injections over a 14-day period of a genetically engineered protein called CTLA4g.

The mice that did not receive the protein shots rejected the tissue transplants and the grafts died within a week. Grafts in the mice that did receive the CTLA4g

shots, however, survived and, in most cases, showed no signs of being rejected by the mouse immune system. Blomstone reported that the grafts also produced insulin, thus correcting their diabetes. Co-author Dr. J. Richard Tjian, laboratory of the University of Chicago Medical Center said if the technique can be perfected for human use, "we will have solved the major problem facing organ transplantation today."

Patients receiving kidney, heart or liver transplants now must take a lifetime of drugs to prevent rejection. These drugs suppress all immune functions, making the patient vulnerable to disease.

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