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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **RECOVERY OF HOMICIDE VICTIM FRANK BЛИGH'S REMAINS TPD CASE #1904160360**

On April 16, 2019, members of the Tucson Police Department and Tucson Fire Department responded to the report of an explosion and house fire at a residence located in a neighborhood – within Operations Division East – in the city of Tucson. The homeowner was identified as 72-year-old retired Tucson resident and military veteran, Frank Bligh. Mr. Bligh's remains were not located in the wreckage of the home. One of his vehicles was determined to be missing from the garage of the residence. TPD detectives initiated an investigation of the explosion and fire at the home and the disappearance of Mr. Bligh. Over the next several months, the investigation resulted in the filing of charges against Blane Barksdale and Susan Barksdale for the murder of Mr. Bligh in June of 2019. Blane Barksdale and Susan Barksdale were arraigned in September of 2019. Susan Barksdale pled guilty to one count of Manslaughter in November 2021. Blane Barksdale pled guilty to one count of 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Murder in December of 2021. On April 29, 2022, Blane Barksdale was sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in the murder of Mr. Bligh.

TPD Homicide Detectives received information in late December of 2021 about the location of the remains of Mr. Frank Bligh. Acting on this information, TPD Officers conducted an initial scout of the location, which was in Gila County and on San Carlos Apache Reservation lands. The terrain was treacherous and the search area was so large that an extensive number of resources were required to search the land safely and efficiently.

On January 4, 2022, through the collaborative efforts of staff from the Pinetop Office of the FBI, Gila County Sheriff's Department, San Carlos Apache Police Department, San Carlos Apache Rangers, Tucson Police Rapid Response Team (RRT) members, Tucson Police Crime Scene Specialist, TFD/TPD medics, and Tucson Police Homicide investigators, the remains of Mr. Frank Bligh were discovered deep in the Salt River Canyon. In total, there were more than 40 different operators assisting in the search. Each bringing with them specialized training in areas like UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) operations, rappelling, K-9, medical treatment, and search & rescue.

On January 12, 2022, a day before what would have been Mr. Bligh's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Office of the Medical Examiner confirmed the remains were that of Mr. Bligh. The family of Frank Bligh expressed their appreciation to TPD, Pima County Attorney's Office and the other agencies who helped find and identify his remains so that he may receive a proper burial and be put to rest. This investigation, which began over two and a half years ago, is a shining example of the cooperation and commitment from various law enforcement agencies across Arizona that came together to help bring this case to a close.

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