

Chadwick E. Wagner, Chief of Police
Media Statement

Good afternoon everyone, I am here today to discuss and bring some closure to the Adam Walsh abduction and homicide investigation that began over twenty seven (27) years ago. Approximately twelve (12) years have lapsed since the Adam Walsh files were disclosed for inspection. Although I did not necessarily agree with the Court decision to disclose the investigative files, our Agency has continued to investigate leads and interview potential witnesses during the years since. This Police Department has spared no expense during this period, including sending Detectives to destinations throughout the country, in the furtherance of any new information regarding the abduction and death of Adam Walsh. Since my appointment to Police Chief nearly one year ago, I have approved dispatching our Detectives to location(s) outside of Florida to conduct interviews. Our continuing investigation during the past twelve (12) years has only recommitted our focus upon Ottis Toole. Through a lengthy process of exclusion over the entire investigative period of twenty seven (27) years, the direction of this investigation has always continued to focus upon Ottis Toole as the perpetrator of this horrific crime.

During my tenure with the Hollywood Police Department, I have served as a homicide investigator among other investigative assignments. Prior to this year, I never actually had the opportunity to review the entire Adam Walsh investigation. I did observe the investigation handled by others in the Department and admittedly realized, even years ago, that this investigation had flaws. This fact was confirmed when I recently had the opportunity to digest the entire investigative file. Nevertheless, in the first few months into my appointment as Police Chief, I committed as a priority to resolve and conclude this investigation. I believe the Walshes are entitled to this level of commitment.

As I referenced earlier, I made it my priority upon my selection as Chief of Police to review the investigative direction of the Adam Walsh case and contact John and Reve' Walsh personally. My reason for contacting them directly was twofold; to indicate my intention of reviewing the direction of this investigation and to apologize for investigative mistakes that transpired during the early years of this investigation. Although I was not a member of the Hollywood Police Department when this tragedy occurred in 1981, I am nevertheless a parent who can only imagine the pain the Walshes have endured through the years without the satisfaction of closure in this investigation. It is inherently my responsibility on behalf of this Police Agency to express remorse to the Walshes and indicate to them the emphasis we have placed on this continuing investigation regardless of the initial investigative difficulties.

Having analyzed and reviewed the Adam Walsh investigative file several times during the last year, I had the opportunity to meet retired Miami Beach Homicide Detective Joe Matthews, who has been involved in this case since the inception, and who had conducted an independent review and investigation of this case. Consistent with the opinions of investigators past and present, I agreed with the ultimate conclusion of this independent investigation, that Ottis Toole was the perpetrator of this crime. With the acknowledgment that our investigation placed Ottis Toole in Hollywood, Florida at or near the time of Adam's abduction along with the multiple confessions countered by several subsequent recantations, our Agency has devoted an inordinate amount of time seeking leads to other potential perpetrators rather than emphasizing Ottis Toole as our primary suspect. One common denominator remains following an additional twelve (12) years of investigating leads and interviewing potential witnesses after the court ordered disclosure of the investigative files; that the pedophile and convicted murderer, Ottis Toole has continued to be our only real suspect.

As we know, Ottis Toole is deceased and formal, legal action is not possible, nor is it something that the Walsh family is seeking. However, in the interest of justice, the Hollywood Police Department is announcing today that it is our determination and conclusion that Ottis Toole was the abductor and murderer of Adam Walsh. This conclusion is one that is based on a vast amount of circumstantial evidence.

Therefore, it is my decision, as Chief of the City of Hollywood Police Department, in consult with investigators, past and present, to exceptionally clear this investigation with the conclusion that if Ottis Toole was alive today, he would be arrested for the abduction and murder of Adam Walsh on July 27, 1981. This decision is predicated upon thorough discussions with the Broward County State Attorney's Office, as well as the Walsh family. I sincerely hope that John and Reve' Walsh realize some closure with this decision.