

DNA INITIATIVES IN THE CARIBBEAN

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The Bahamas is the first country in the region to have used the FBI combined DNA Index System (CODIS) to solve a crime. Suspects in the sexual assaults of two females which occurred during March of the years 1998 and 1999, in Nassau, Bahamas, were excluded by DNA evidence but semen from both cases were identified as coming from the same perpetrator through CODIS.

Samples obtained from victims of separate home invasion/sexual assault incidents which occurred during May and June 2000 in the Pompano Beach, Florida area were sent to the Broward County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory for DNA analysis. A Bahamian National was identified as a potential suspect and linked to these incidents via DNA profiling. Profiling through CODIS subsequently identified him as the perpetrator of sexual assaults in the Bahamas.

This presentation will review some of the initiatives that have lead to this success. These initiatives have included, with the assistance of the Promega Corporation, the First Caribbean Scientific DNA Workshop which was held in Nassau, Bahamas, in August 1999. The workshop saw the coming together of forensic representatives from the Caribbean Islands of Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Trinidad.

In keeping with similar initiatives taken in Europe (European Network of Forensic Science Institutes – ENFSI), Latin America (Grupo Iberoamericano de Trabajo en Analisis de DNA – GITAD), and North America Scientific Working Group for DNA Analysis methods (SWGDM), we have come together to form the Caribbean Technical DNA Working Group. As a group, we will consolidate our efforts and move ahead with a single mission for the development and standardization of DNA technology within the Caribbean.