

Cold-case project IDs sex-assault suspects

By Howard Pankratz, Denver Post Staff Writer
April 27, 2006

Two men suspected in separate 1996 sexual assaults were charged Wednesday as a result of evidence uncovered in Denver's DNA Cold Case Project.

Lavone Barron, 51, is accused of a June 16, 1996, attack on a 27-year-old woman. The victim was sleeping in her home and awoke to find a man holding a knife to her throat. She was sexually assaulted. No suspects were identified at the time, but Barron was identified through the DNA project, funded by the National Institute of Justice.

Barron is in prison, serving a 48-year term for burglary.

The second man charged Wednesday was Guillermo Barron-Baca, 30, accused of attacking a 33-year-old woman Sept. 14, 1996.

The victim accepted a ride home with Barron-Baca and another man but was taken to an empty field and was brutally attacked by them, according to Lynn Kimbrough, spokeswoman for the Denver district attorney's office.

The other man was arrested within days and eventually pleaded guilty in the case. Barron-Baca is serving a 48-year prison term for sexually assaulting a woman in Lafayette.

The DNA Cold Case Project is an ongoing collaborative effort involving Denver police detectives, the Denver Police Department crime lab and the district attorney's office.

In 2002 and 2004, the Police Department crime lab applied for and received \$893,976 in grant funds to identify and analyze DNA samples. The grant request proposed using the latest DNA technology to re-examine an estimated 700 unsolved sexual assault and homicide cases.

As of May 2005, more than 2,900 cases had been reviewed. Kimbrough said eight sexual assault cases and one indecent exposure case have seen charges filed as a result of the project.

Staff writer Howard Pankratz can be reached at 303-820-1939 or hpankratz@denverpost.com.