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Deputies pursue New Mexico link to Jenner slayings

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An effort to confirm whether a wanted fugitive killed in New Mexico last week may have been responsible for the 2004 slayings of a couple on a beach near Jenner is ramping up.

Sonoma County sheriff's detectives on Wednesday were planning to be in New Mexico within 48 hours as they search for evidence to link Joseph Henry Burgess to the unsolved Jenner case.



Joseph Henry Burgess

Burgess, 62, was involved in a gun battle with two sheriff's deputies in New Mexico last week that left him and one of the deputies dead.

When investigators put his fingerprints in an FBI database, it revealed that Burgess was wanted in connection with the 1972 slayings of a young Christian couple who were killed as they slept on a Vancouver Island beach.

The New Jersey-born Burgess had also had been arrested in 1968 for failing to report for military duty.

Investigators are now hoping they can determine whether Burgess may have been involved in the 2004 slayings of Lindsay Cutshall, 22, and Jason Allen, 26, who were shot to death as they slept on a beach north of Jenner in circumstances similar to those with the Canadian couple.

Serial killers often have similar motives to their crimes and use similar methods to carry them out, said Sonoma County Sheriff's Cpt. Matt McCaffrey, which are among the reasons investigators identified Burgess as a person of interest in the Jenner case.

Burgess has ties to Northern California, including a sister who as recently as 2007

resided in the Salinas area. McCaffrey said other ties exist but he declined to reveal them, saying he did not want to compromise the ongoing investigation.

The effort to connect Burgess to the Jenner case includes comparing his DNA with that found on items recovered at the Jenner beach, including a beer bottle.

"Just because we don't make a match doesn't mean Burgess isn't our guy," McCaffrey said. "But if we do make a match, that's significant. It puts him at the crime scene."

Investigators also are hoping for travel receipts, diary entries — anything that might reveal where Burgess was and what he did prior to his death.

Last week's deadly violence occurred during an undercover operation to apprehend a person who had been repeatedly breaking into vacation cabins in New Mexico's Jemez mountains and stealing clothes, food and other items needed for outdoor survival.

The two New Mexico sheriff's deputies were hiding out in a cabin, watching homes across the street, when an intruder later identified as Burgess came through an unlocked window and surprised them.

That Burgess chose that cabin still baffles investigators.

"We're talking about thousands of cabins," said Lt. Eric Garcia, a spokesman for the the New Mexico Department of Public Safety. "What are the chances he would break into the cabin where the deputy and sergeant were waiting?"

Sgt. Joe Harris was shot and killed by Burgess in the ensuing melee. The other deputy was uninjured.

As they grieve the loss, New Mexico authorities are hoping they can be of help in solving the Jenner case, Garcia said.

"We're hoping as a law enforcement agency that we can bring closure to the case pending there," he said.



