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NEWS RELEASE –

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Steven Cumberbatch Extradited to Denver to Face Charges in 1994 Cold Case Homicide

DENVER—Rita Desjardine was 36-years old when her body was found in a Denver motel room the morning of December 7, 1994. Today, prosecutors with the Denver District Attorney’s Office Cold Case Unit announced that Steven Cumberbatch (currently 58-years old) is charged with her murder. He was extradited from Virginia and is now in Denver to face charges.

Motel staff found Ms. Desjardine’s body and contacted the Denver Police Department, which began investigating the incident. While investigators never gave up on finding Ms. Desjardine’s killer, the case remained unsolved until a break came in July 2018, when the Denver Police Department’s Crime Lab got a lead connecting Cumberbatch to DNA evidence at the scene. A witness reported seeing a man matching Cumberbatch’s description leaving the hotel room prior to the discovery of Ms. Desjardine’s body.

In October 2019, the National Institute of Justice [awarded a \\$500,000 grant](#) that is enabling the work of the Denver DA’s Office, the Denver Police Department’s Cold Case Unit and the Denver Police Department’s Crime Lab to solve violent crime cold cases for which a suspect is identified, but in which prosecutors have not yet been able to file charges. That funding was instrumental in leading to the two charges of murder in the first degree (F1) against Cumberbatch. His case number is 20CR20010 and is being heard in Denver District Court courtroom 5H.

“Violent crime cold cases are among the most challenging of all our cases,” said Denver DA Beth McCann. “This federal funding was key to building the case that led to charging Steven Cumberbatch with the murder of Rita Desjardine.”

“I am proud of the collaboration between the Cold Case Units of DPD and the DA’s Office and the DPD Crime Laboratory that this grant is enabling,” said Denver Police Chief Paul Pazen. “The work being done under this grant is innovative and important for our community.”

The filing of a criminal charge is merely a formal accusation that an individual(s) committed a crime(s) under Colorado laws. A defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. *See Colo. RPC 3.6*