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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **MISSING EVIDENCE, IRREGULARITIES FOUND AT UPPER DUBLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT FOLLOWING DETECTIVE'S DEATH**

UPPER DUBLIN, Pa. (March 2, 2017) – Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele joined with Upper Dublin Township Deputy Police Chief Lee Benson, Upper Dublin Township Manager Paul A. Leonard and Montgomery County Chief Detective Samuel J. Gallen to announce the results of an independent review conducted by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau into irregularities and missing evidence from the department's evidence room. The evidence room was overseen by Upper Dublin Detective Michael W. Gommer, who died while off-duty in his home on Dec. 30, 2016.

Upper Dublin Police had noted potential irregularities in the evidence room and contacted the District Attorney's Office in late December to request an independent review. The Upper Dublin Police cooperated fully with the review. Montgomery County Detectives reviewed all evidence for cases initiated from 2010 to 2016 and spot checked monetary evidence prior to that initial date. The investigation revealed that \$7,183.40 in cash and a variety of drugs, including pills, cocaine, heroin and marijuana, were missing from the evidence room. No firearms or other evidence—among thousands of items—were found to be tampered with or missing.

“The investigation by the Montgomery County Detectives found that Gommer had a significant and undetected drug issue, which led to his stealing from the evidence room,” said Steele. “This law enforcement officer was able to hide his addiction from many people around him. His death and the subsequent ramifications for this police department starkly illustrate that no one anywhere is immune to the drug problem we are facing as a society and in Montgomery County and no group in any community is untouched by the scourge of drugs.”

Deputy Chief Benson said several new procedures have been developed and implemented in the past two months to prevent a reoccurrence. The township has purchased and is in the process of installing four interior evidence room surveillance cameras. Additionally, the police department has implemented new evidence control policies and procedures. These include:

- Adopting a new two-person, two-lock rule to ensure that a minimum of two certified officers are involved in every phase of evidence recording, management and disposal;
- Ensuring that a third officer, from the upper command of the police department, is involved whenever “high-value property” (such as drugs, cash or weapons) is involved;
- Purchasing a state-of-the-art, bar code-based system for property room management, to replace the current paper-based system.

“These new procedures, which exceed state standards, provide a needed system of checks and balances so no one person has complete access to accept, transfer or destroy evidence in any case, open or closed,” said Benson.

Township Manager Leonard—who spoke at the press conference on behalf of Upper Dublin Board of Commissioners President Ira S. Tackel—praised the police department, while noting the seriousness of Gommer’s actions. “We could not be more proud of our police department—its outstanding service to the community, untiring devotion to justice and its resilience,” he said. “Yet there is no dismissing the facts that what Det. Gommer did was wrong, that his addiction was real, and that we must all recognize that no organization, including a township police department, is immune from being touched by drug addiction.”

The affected evidence is related to 75 adult criminal cases and 12 juvenile cases, including 11 open cases. The District Attorney’s Office is in the process of notifying attorneys with involved cases.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele