

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

- MEMORANDUM -

**TO:** MAJOR JENNIE HOFF  
ASC CHAIRPERSON

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 9, 2022

**FROM:** SERGEANT BRAD BAENA  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

**SUBJECT:** OFFICER OF THE YEAR 2021  
AWARD NOMINATION

*RB #2025*

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It is a great honor to nominate Detective Raiza Mardis for the prestigious Officer of the Year 2021 Award. Detective Raiza Mardis consistently produces an outstanding work product, has a tremendous work ethic, aims to provide a high level of professionalism and service to the community, and thoroughly investigates her assigned cases with steadfast determination and passion. Detective Raiza Mardis was recipient of the following awards in 2021: Detective of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, Dr. Roy Life Saving Award, and the 2021 Anti-Defamation League Doris Murray Felton Excellence in Law Enforcement.

Detective Mardis' ambition, fortitude, and keen investigative skillset is evident in the following assigned Coral Gables Police Department cases:

**Anti-Semitic Graffiti Investigation**

*CGPD Cases: 21-001747, 21-001769, 21-001771, 21-002021, and 21-2025*

Throughout February, March, and April 2021 numerous incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti were reported throughout Miami-Dade County and Davie, FL, where a subject had spray-painted anti-Semitic comments (i.e., "Communism is Judaism," "Beware of Jews," "Don't be fooled," "Revelations 2:9 and 3:9," "Zionism is Satanism," "Shabbos Goyim," etc.) along with the Star of David. These hate crimes were intended to target and instill fear within the Jewish community. The City of Coral Gables experienced five related cases during this time frame; therefore, these cases were assigned to Detective Mardis for follow-up investigation.

During Detective Mardis' investigation, she developed an extensive timeline to track the subject's whereabouts prior to, during, and after each offense. Detective Mardis utilized this timeline to complete a systematic and thorough area canvass. This canvass helped Detective Mardis obtain video surveillance footage at various businesses and residences, as well as the identification of an eyewitness which produced positive investigative leads. Due to these findings, Detective Mardis was able to connect the same subject to all her cases.

It is important to note, video surveillance recovered from 7-Eleven in Coral Gables, FL, depicted the subject casually conversing with a Coral Gables police officer on the night of one of the incidents. Detective Mardis met with this officer to determine his interaction with the subject.

Per the officer, the subject approached him and began making incoherent racial statements. For instance, he stated, "the white race was going down, all other races are trying to drown the white race, and the white race was no longer in power." Furthermore, he discussed World War II, Russia, and Nazi Germany. This interaction was later used to assist Detective Mardis in the identification of the subject.

Detective Mardis also played a critical role in connecting these crimes to other similar cases throughout Miami-Dade County. For example, she was contacted by the Miami-Dade Police Department's Homeland Security Bureau (MDPD HSB) to support them with their countywide area canvass, which yielded positive results in the successful acquisition of additional video footage linking the same subject to their reported incidents. Furthermore, she assisted the City of Miami Police Department and South Miami Police Department, by obtaining additional video surveillance footage from their jurisdictions involving similar anti-Semitic graffiti, which also confirmed the same subject's involvement.

To make an identification, Detective Raiza Mardis authored and disseminated a Need to Identify BOLO/flyer (CGPD BOLO # 21-089) to various local, state, and federal partners. Moreover, Detective Mardis attended the midnight shift roll call at the police station to meet with officers and update them with the information gathered during her investigation. She also informed the midnight shift officers that the subject did interact with one of our officers on the same shift at 7-Eleven, where he made racial comments and used a scooter/motorcycle as his mode of transportation. An officer at this roll call advised Detective Mardis he had also encountered a similar subject back in November 2020 at the same 7-Eleven. He further stated, the subject had made similar racial statements, as well as utilized a similar scooter as his mode of transportation. Fortunately, this officer had trespassed the subject from 7-Eleven that evening for attempting to steal a pack of gum and cigarettes.

Due to this new information gathered, Detective Mardis was able to obtain a potential name for the subject. Subsequently, Detective Mardis met with the original officer who engaged the subject at the 7-Eleven. This officer confirmed it was in fact the same subject, later identified as Mr. Benjamin Michael Garcia. Due to the identification, probable cause to arrest Mr. Garcia was established; therefore, Detective Mardis submitted Probable Cause BOLO/flyer (updated BOLO #21-089). This was a huge break in the case. Detective Mardis then contacted all five victims to update them with the status of their case. She confirmed one victim was of Jewish decent. Moreover, Detective Mardis reached out to our local Jewish community leaders (i.e., Temple Judea Rabbi Jonathan Fisch), who expressed great concern and felt the Jewish community was under attack and victimized.

On April 13, 2021, the Coral Gables Police Department, led by Detective Mardis, successfully located and arrested Mr. Garcia. Detective Mardis interviewed Mr. Garcia, who cooperated and confessed to committing the anti-Semitic acts throughout Miami-Dade County and Davie, FL. Additionally, Mr. Garcia gave consent to search his residence, where Detective Mardis successfully recovered the spray paint cans used to commit these heinous acts.

List of all related case numbers which were cleared as a result of Detective Mardis:

Coral Gables Police Department

**CGPD 21001747**

3951 Alhambra Cir, Coral Gables, FL 33146 (construction site/tarp)

**CGPD 21001769**

1241 Bird Rd, Coral Gables, FL 33146 (construction site/tarp)

**CGPD 21001771**

250 Bird Rd, Coral Gables, FL 33146 (construction site/tarp)

**CGPD 21002021**

657 N Greenway Dr, Coral Gables, FL 33134 (construction site/tarp)

**CGPD 21002025**

1700 Ponce De Leon Blvd, Coral Gables, FL 33134 (State Farm Insurance/wall)

City of Miami Police Department

**MPD 2104100022508**

2820 McFarlane Rd, Miami, FL 33133 (Peacock Park/dock and boardwalk)

**MPD 2104120022915**

1075 Biscayne Blvd, Miami, FL 33132 (Maurice Ferrer Park/seawall)

**MPD 2103270019146**

3773 Bird Rd (European Auto Service Center/wall)

South Miami Police Department

**SMPD 2100492**

4000 SW 57 Ave, Miami, FL 33155 (construction site/tarp)

Miami-Dade Police Department

**PD210212046840**

**PD210212046678**

**PD210223060085**

**PD210301066725**

**PD210223059738**

**PD210327096526**

**PD210224060590**

**PD210206039822**

**PD210409111000**

**PD210408109620**

**PD210206039803**

**PD210212047001**

Davie Police Department

**PD 21011988**

2701 S University Dr (Chase Bank)

2853 S University Dr (Fresh Kitchen)

2889 S University Dr (Vicky's Bakery)

### **Organized Retail Crime Investigation**

*CGPD Cases: 21-000354 and 21-001377*

Detective Mardis was assigned a retail theft investigation at Neiman Marcus involving two offenders. Both offenders stole high valued items on two occasions. Detective Mardis created a Need to Identify BOLO(s)/flyer(s) with both offenders, which produced a positive identification of both offenders through her law enforcement contacts. During her investigation, it was learned both offenders were under investigation by various Broward County entities (ex. Ft. Lauderdale PD) and linked to an organized retail crime syndicate. Detective Mardis was able to convince one of the offenders to turn himself in. The second offender was linked to an additional retail theft at Neiman Marcus. Detective Mardis was able to successfully locate the second offender in Hialeah, FL and arrested him as well.

### **“MS13” Graffiti Investigation**

*CGPD Cases: 21-004469, 21-004501, 21-004519, 21-004522, 21-004523, 21-004524, 21-004525, 21-004526, 21-004527, 21-004528, and 21-004531 (Linked West Miami PD 21-002387 and Doral PD 210814015602)*

The offender spray painted “MS13” and vandalized numerous locations in Coral Gables between 8/14/2021 and 8/18/2021. The offender was involved in several other vandalism cases throughout Miami-Dade County; specifically, in West Miami and Doral.

Detective Mardis was able to obtain video surveillance footage at various locations, linking the same subject to other criminal mischief incidents. She was also able to get a lead on a possible offender linked to one of the victims. Detective Mardis utilized the lead to connect the offender to an unrelated disturbance at a local Hooter’s in the City of Miami. Additionally, various investigative tools and software programs were used to link the offender to a vandalism at his family’s residence, where the same-colored spray paint was used. Detective Mardis ran the offender’s vehicle in our License Plate Reader database which placed the offender in the area of one of the related crimes. A Need to Identify BOLO/flyer was authored and disseminated to various law enforcement contacts. Detective Mardis was able to identify a Facebook account for the offender. The offender’s description matched the offender in the various video surveillance footage. Therefore, a Person of Interest BOLO/flyer was disseminated to law enforcement entities.

A spot check of the offender’s local address was conducted, and the offender’s vehicle was located. A record check of the offender was conducted which revealed he was in custody for a vandalism in the City of West Miami. Detective Mardis contacted the West Miami Detective assigned to the case. The West Miami detective reviewed surveillance footage for the various Gables cases and positively identified the offender. Detective Mardis responded to the location of the offender’s vehicle which was registered to his mother. The mother gave written consent to search her vehicle. Inside the vehicle were items linking the offender to the various Gables and West Miami cases (i.e., articles of clothing, spray paint cans, and jack used to smash a store front). Detective Mardis was able to submit an electronic arrest form due to the offender already being in Miami Dade Corrections custody.

**Habitual Target Department Store Shoplifter**

*CGPD Cases: 21-002456, 21-003007, and 21-003601*

Detective Raiza Mardis investigated three separate retail theft incidents at Target Department Store in Coral Gables involving the same female subject. On all three incidents, the offender stole Fit Bit watches. A Need to Identify BOLO/flyer was prepared and disseminated. No leads were produced. Detective Mardis was able to obtain suspect vehicle tag information from Loss Prevention. Detective Mardis conducted a record check on the vehicle tag. Detective Mardis identified the person who was paying the car insurance. She ran this individual in our investigative databases which positively matched the description of the offender. Furthermore, she conducted additional investigative database searches which revealed the offender had been recently arrested on a petit theft charge. Detective Mardis utilized the offender's mugshot from that arrest to link the tattoo on her neck to the Target Department Store's video surveillance footage. Detective Mardis was able to obtain the offender's local address and affect an arrest.

**Vehicle Burglar/Credit Card Fraud/Identity Fraud Investigation**

*CGPD Case: 21-004786*

Detective Raiza Mardis was assigned a vehicle burglary case involving the theft of the victim's wallet and use of his credit card(s) and Florida driver's license. Detective Mardis obtained video surveillance stills from the Princess Motel in the City of Miami to create and disseminate a Need to Identify BOLO/flyer. No identification was made at the time. While investigating an unrelated incident at the Chateau Blue Hotel in Coral Gables, Detective Mardis was able to link the subject who booked the hotel room (via a passport/passport photo) to the offender of the vehicle burglary incident. Due to the offender's information on the passport, she was able to create and disseminate a PC to Arrest BOLO/flyer. Additionally, Detective Mardis conducted an in-custody search via Miami Dade Corrections, which revealed the offender was in their custody. Therefore, an electronic arrest affidavit was submitted.

**Bicycle Theft Investigations/Operation Vicious Cycle**

*CGPD Cases: 21-004989, 21-005001, 21-5110, 21-005519, 21-006260, and 21-006488)*

Over the course of several months, Coral Gables and surrounding jurisdictions were experiencing an increase in bicycle thefts. As a result, Detective Mardis was tapped to spearhead an on-going operation (named "Operation Vicious Cycle" by Detective Mardis) to identify, proactively surveil, make arrests, and recover stolen bicycles. Additionally, Detective Mardis worked closely with the City of Miami PST officers to identify bike thieves living and loitering in their jurisdiction. During these months, Detective Mardis successfully identified and arrested numerous bicycle thieves (closed by arrest approximately 6 cases). These partnerships with outside agencies remain today and have positively impacted the reduction in bicycle related criminal activity.

### **Residential Burglary Investigation**

*CGPD Case: 21-003747 (Linked CGPD Case 21-005434 & 21-005853)*

On July 8, 2021 (in the morning hours) a residential burglary occurred at 927 Sunset Rd. Detective Mardis was assigned the case. Detective Mardis completed an extensive area canvass, where she was able to recover video surveillance footage from neighbors in the area. The video surveillance footage captured a subject vehicle, a white Infinity JX35, occupied by a white male subject wearing an Armani Exchange t-shirt and Adidas jumpsuit. Using the video footage, she was able to piece together a detailed timeline of events. The footage was also used to create a Need to Identify BOLO. Detective Mardis and I obtained a DHSMV list of all vehicles matching the subject vehicle description. This extensive list was used to run the vehicle tags in our LPR database to identify a possible vehicle match.

Months later, additional burglaries occurred in the south end of Coral Gables, Pinecrest, Miami-Dade, and City of Miami which involved the same offender but different subject vehicle, a champagne-colored Lincoln MKC with distinctive metallic door trim pillars. Therefore, Detective Mardis requested DHSMV vehicle data on all similar Lincoln MKCs. With the assistance from Detective Emilio Flores, a vehicle match was identified. Using investigative software, Detectives Raiza Mardis and Emilio Flores were able to identify the registered vehicle owner. Further investigation revealed, the registered owner's prior vehicle was the white Infiniti JX35 used in the 927 Sunset Rd residential burglary. This information was used to assist in the identification of the offender (vehicle owner's boyfriend). Detective Mardis conducted pawnshop queries which linked the offender to pawned jewelry belonging to the victim at 927 Sunset Rd. Additionally, Detective Mardis identified social media postings by family members where it depicts the offender wearing the same clothing when committing these crimes, as well as family members wearing stolen jewelry taken in these burglaries. With this new information, Detective Mardis was able to secure a tracker warrant signed by the Judge, where detectives with the assistance from MDPD, installed a tracker on the subject vehicle. Numerous surveillance details were conducted where detectives tracked the offender casing residences in the Coral Gables and the City of Miami. Due to these findings, Detective Mardis was able to obtain a search warrant signed by the Judge and subsequently executed at the offender's residence. Detectives were successful in the recovery of a large quantity of property which included stolen jewelry and property belonging to several victims linked to these listed residential burglaries. Detective Mardis has obtained an Arrest Warrant for the at large offender.

### **Commercial Burglary Investigation**

*CGPD Case: 21-006450 (Linked West Miami PD Case 21-002837)*

On November 11, 2021, at approximately 1:51 am, a commercial burglary occurred at 269 Miracle Mile (The Bakery Smoke Shop), where the offender smashed the front glass door to gain entry. Once inside, the offender stole numerous vaping products. Detective Raiza Mardis was assigned the case. On the morning of, Detective Mardis responded to the business to conduct a walk thru and review the video surveillance footage. The victim advised the offender was a prior customer, who had stolen merchandise in the past, but never reported the incident. He also advised the offender was possibly employed at Cebada Rooftop on Giralda Ave.


While on site, Detective Mardis reviewed the video footage which revealed the offender was wearing a surgical face mask and hat to conceal his identity. Therefore, Detective Mardis requested the victim attempt to locate and play previous video footage of him coming to the store. The victim was able to playback prior surveillance footage, dated October 20, 2021, which showed the offender without a mask and baseball cap. She contacted the owner of Cebada Rooftop restaurant, who was able to confirm the identity of the offender and stated he was no longer employed at the restaurant. The owner of Cebada reviewed his personnel files and provided Detective Mardis with the offender's name and DOB. Additionally, the owner of Cebada stated one of his employees encountered the offender the night of the incident at The Bar located on Giralda Ave. Detective Mardis responded to The Bar to review their video footage. The footage did provide confirmation the offender was there, and the clothing matched what the offender was wearing in the video footage from the smoke shop.

On November 12, 2021, A PC to Arrest BOLO/Flyer was disseminated and a PC Message was submitted to MDPD. Detectives then responded to the offender's residence where he was taken into custody. Certain items of clothing (i.e., jacket and sling bag) were located inside his residence matching the same clothing he wore during the time of the burglary. These items were coincidentally requested by the offender to be transported with him during the time of his arrest. Post Miranda Rights per form signed, the offender admitted to Detective Raiza Mardis and I that he committed the commercial burglary. Most of the stolen merchandise was recovered and returned to the victim.


These cases only touch the surface of Detective Raiza Mardis' hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication to the Coral Gables Police Department and the residents of the City of Coral Gables. It is without question, Detective Raiza Mardis is most deserving of the Officer of the Year 2021 Award. Thank you for your consideration.

**REVIEWED BY:**

**DATE**

  
Nestor Carbonell, Lieutenant  
Criminal Investigations Division

2/9/2022

  
Raul Pedrosa, Major  
Criminal Investigations Division

02/09/2022

  
Jenni Hoff, Major  
ASC Chairperson

2/10/22

BB/bb