

# THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION LABORATORY



**Established 1943**

## **The United States Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory's History**

In 1943, the world was at war and millions of Americans had been called to serve their country. The chain of command realized that in order to defeat the enemy aggressors, they needed to control the internal criminal element. To assist in accomplishing this mission, the Army's first forensic laboratory, designated as the Scientific Investigations Branch of the Provost Marshal's Office, 12th U.S. Army Group, was activated on 1 October 1943 in Algiers, French North Africa.

The laboratory consisted of Second Lieutenant George R. "Pappy" Bird and a photographer. They moved with advancing forces from Algiers to Naples, Italy where Sergeant James Boarders joined the new crime laboratory. The newly formed team then moved to Marseilles in southern France. While in France, all the team's work was conducted in borrowed offices of abandoned homes. As the offensive picked up speed, Bird, who had now been promoted to captain, recognized the need for a mobile laboratory.

While in Marseilles, Captain Bird obtained a weapons repair truck and its driver from the 27th Military Police (MP) Detachment (CI). The truck was converted into a laboratory, adding mobile capabilities to the team. He also added a jeep and a chemist to his arsenal before rejoining the allied advance which was crossing the Rhine River and moving into the heart of Germany. The laboratory ended its wartime duty in Fulda; moving to Wiesbaden and then eventually to Frankfurt.

In 1953, the European Laboratory underwent a major modernization of facilities and equipment. During this period, the laboratory was also assigned the additional responsibility of supervising the "lie detector program." Furthermore, the organization was also designated as the point of contact between the U.S. Army and INTERPOL.

The Army's second forensic laboratory was founded in Manila, Philippine Islands shortly after the islands were recaptured from the Japanese. In 1946, the facility was moved to Tokyo, Japan; however, due to inadequate facilities and equipment, the laboratory was able to provide only limited services. In 1948, Colonel Calvin Goddard, a noted criminologist, was assigned as the commander of the Tokyo laboratory. He was responsible for modernizing the facility, acquiring state-of-the-art scientific equipment, and adding Japanese civilian and American technicians to the staff. The third laboratory was established 1 May 1945 at Fort Sam Houston in Texas and then promptly relocated to Fort Gordon, Georgia in September 1948. The selective service draft was used to provide trained individuals to staff the facility, however, persistent shortages remained. In an attempt to alleviate the lack of qualified military police criminal investigation laboratory technicians and in order to provide trained replacements to meet future personnel needs, an in-house laboratory training program was established by the Provost Marshal General on 1 February 1956. In September 1983, the laboratory was moved to its current location at Fort Gillem, Georgia.

In addition to the three Regular Army Crime Laboratories, there were at least three Army Reserve Laboratories: the 379th MP Laboratory (CI), in Washington, D.C.; the 498th Laboratory (CI), in Wichita, Kansas; and the 380th MP Detachment (Crime Lab), Oakland Army Base, Oakland, California. These laboratories trained and maintained professional relationships with the laboratory at Fort Gordon, Georgia

During the Vietnam War, a fourth forensic laboratory was established as the U.S. Army Republic of Vietnam Crime Laboratory in Long Binh, Vietnam. When America's involvement in Vietnam was reduced, the laboratory was closed, and its mission was reorganized under the laboratory in Japan.

On 17 September 1971, the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC) was established as a major Army Command. The three existing criminal laboratories: U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory (USACIL), Fort Gordon, GA; Detachment B, 9th MP GP (CI), Frankfurt, Germany; and the 515th MP Detachment B, Japan, were integrated into USACIDC and redesignated as USACIL-CONUS, USACIL-EUROPE, and USACIL-PACIFIC.

In 1985, USACIDC's Commander, Major General Eugene R. Cromartie, directed the reorganization of the USACIDC laboratory structure. His vision was implemented in 1987 with the unification of USACIDC's three crime laboratories under one command - the USACIL. The USACIL was now a centrally directed criminal laboratory system to provide cost effective, state of the art, full-service forensic service support to the Department of Defense (DoD) law enforcement and legal agencies worldwide.

The 1990s brought the end of the Cold War and with it, a reduction of U.S. military commitments in Asia and Europe. As a result of DoD downsizing in response to reduced commitments, USACIL-PACIFIC was deactivated on 15 September 1993 and USACIL-Europe was deactivated on 1 June 1996. With the deactivations, laboratory operations were consolidated at USACIL-CONUS which assumed worldwide mission responsibility.

On 25 November 2002, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to initiate construction of an 88,600 square-foot, state-of-the-art criminal investigation laboratory. The USACIL officially occupied the now 133,000 square-foot facility on 11 January 2006, with an expansion of the original 88k square-foot design. The laboratory consistently updates its footprint to ensure top-of-the-line forensic testing is available.

USACIL has maintained its formal accreditation since 1985, making it the 31st forensic laboratory in the United States to become accredited. From 1985 through February 2011, USACIL was accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors - Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD - LAB). In December 2010, USACIL was assessed by the Forensic Quality Services - Forensic Accreditation Program and found to be in compliance with the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) and Forensic Requirements for Accreditation. As such, USACIL earned international accreditation on 16 February 2011 and currently maintains accreditation under ISO standards and in compliance with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Quality Assurance Standards.

Today, USACIL is the only full-service forensic laboratory in the DoD. It provides over 24-forensic services to include processing in DNA, CODIS, Trace Evidence, Drug Chemistry, Firearms and Tool Marks, Latent Prints, Digital Evidence, and Questioned Documents to all DoD investigative agencies worldwide.

The multiple decades of distinguished service can be directly attributed to the men and women, both military and civilian, of the Army's crime laboratories, who have truly lived up to their motto:

**“Justitia Per Scientia” - Justice Through Science**