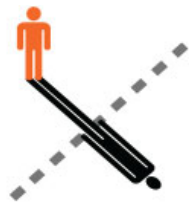


The ones that get away

ACROSS THE U.S., MORE THAN 180,000 FUGITIVES CAN ESCAPE JUSTICE JUST BY CROSSING STATE LINES, A USA TODAY INVESTIGATION FINDS.

Brad Heath, USA TODAY (/staff/679/brad-heath)



CHAPTER 1

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

A CRIMINAL DIASPORA

Chapter 3

COST, RED TAPE COMPLICATE
CORRALLING OF FUGITIVES

Chapter 4

An unwanted fugitive

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MANY CITIES SAY THEY'LL EXTRADITE, THEN DON'T

POLICE WON'T CHASE 186,000 FELONY SUSPECTS [SUBSCRIBE TODAY](#)

Chapter 5

PHILADELPHIA — For a man on the run from charges that he sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl, Thomas Terlecky has surprisingly little to fear from the law. The police here know exactly where to find him, but they will not go get him.

IN CITIES LIKE PHILADELPHIA, A POLICY OF NOT BOUING
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Terlecky got away by catching a Greyhound bus to Miami.

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The police in his new hometown know that Terlecky is a fugitive, and they have tried repeatedly to return him to Philadelphia — both before and after he was convicted of having sex with two other underage girls in Florida. As recently as November, police handcuffed Terlecky and called Philadelphia authorities to tell them their fugitive had been found.

SHARE

But just like every time before, the authorities in Philadelphia refused to take him back.

Across the United States, police and prosecutors are allowing tens of thousands of wanted felons — including more than 3,300 people accused of sexual assaults, robberies and homicides — to escape justice merely by crossing a state border, a USA TODAY investigation found. Those decisions, almost always made in secret, permit fugitives to go free in communities across the country, leaving their crimes unpunished, their victims outraged and the public at risk.

EXPLORE PART 1

- See if your local police will chase fugitives (Chapter 1)
- See the last known locations of Philadelphia fugitives (Chapter 2)
- Check non-extradition rates by state or crime (Chapter 3)
- See how extradition works (Chapter 3)

EXPLORE PART 2

- Read how fugitives remain free to commit new crimes
- Watch videos about victims and their families
- Examine fugitives charged with murder in D.C.
- Watch a N.Y. officer's killer talk about why he was free

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Each fugitive's case is chronicled in a confidential FBI database that police use to track outstanding warrants. In 186,873 of those cases, police indicated that they would not spend the time or money to retrieve the fugitive from another state, a process known as extradition. That's true even if the fugitives are just across a bridge in the state next door. Another 78,878 felony suspects won't be extradited from anyplace but neighboring states.

Few places are immune. Police in Philadelphia, Atlanta and Little Rock — all among the nation's highest-crime cities — told the FBI they wouldn't pursue 90% or more of their felony suspects into other states. Los Angeles police said they would not extradite 77 people for murder or attempted murder, 141 for robbery and 84 for sexual assault.

The FBI refuses to say who or where those fugitives are. But USA TODAY identified thousands of them using records and databases from courts and law enforcement agencies. Among the fugitives police said they would not pursue: a man accused in Collier County, Fla., of hacking his roommate's neck with a machete during a fight over two cans of beer; a man charged with drawing a gun on a Newport News, Va., store manager during a robbery, and even one of the men Pittsburgh identified as among its "most wanted" fugitives.

Such fugitives should be among the easiest targets in the nation's fragmented justice system. The police typically don't hunt them; instead, they wait for officers to come across them again, during traffic stops or when they're arrested on new charges.

More often than not, the suspects are found locked up in another city's jail.

But if that jail happens to be in a different state, local law-enforcement officials regularly refuse to get them because they don't want to pay the cost or jump through the legal hoops required to extradite them. That process can be either swift or surreal: In many cases, it costs no more than a few hundred dollars, but it can also require months of paperwork and the signature of both states' governors.

The police let them get away instead.

Even Terlecky, wanted in Philadelphia for a first-degree felony, was surprised. "Why would they not extradite on a felony warrant?" he said in an interview. His only guess: "This wasn't a case where I forcefully grabbed the kid. That's the only reason I'm thinking why they won't push to bring me back."



Thomas Terlecky talks about the charges he's facing, why he fled Philadelphia, and why officials there won't take him back.

Brad Heath, Jennifer Hamish, Shannon Rae Green, Steve Elfers

Terlecky said that in the 17 years he has been a fugitive, he has lost count of how many times Florida police threw him in jail in hopes of returning him to Pennsylvania. But the arrests all end the same way. In November, Miami-Dade police detained him after he was pulled over for an obscured license plate. A few hours later, Philadelphia officials "asked that (he) be released" because they were unwilling to travel beyond Pennsylvania's neighboring states to get him, according to police records (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1031549-mdpd-incident-report.html#document/p2/a146659>). An officer drove him home.

Terlecky is wanted on charges (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1055678-terlecky-cp-file.html#document/p1/a147512>) that he had what prosecutors called "consensual" sex with a 14-year-old girl in a downtown Philadelphia hotel in 1996, a felony because of her age. He was convicted of having sex with two other girls in Florida — one 14, the other 15 — in the years that followed and is now a registered sex offender. Terlecky said in interviews that he is innocent of the Philadelphia charges, that he fled because he was afraid of being locked up awaiting a trial, and that he would gladly go back if he could be assured that he would not spend time in jail.

Prosecutors said they didn't chase Terlecky because the woman he is accused of assaulting was uncooperative.

"That's not true," the woman said when USA TODAY contacted her this year. She asked not to be identified to protect her privacy.

Her father took her to court on her 15th birthday to testify against Terlecky at a preliminary hearing. "We walked out of there with our heads held high thinking he's going to jail for what he did to me," she said. It was the last she heard of the case; she assumed Terlecky was in prison.

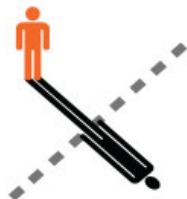
Pennsylvania's Victim Advocate, Jennifer Storm, said victims need to be informed whenever officials choose to let a defendant get away. "It is alarming that there are victims who are further harmed by denying them the opportunity for justice, restitution and safety," she said.

The woman Terlecky is charged with assaulting said no one told her that he fled Philadelphia or that prosecutors there had decided not to pursue him as long as he stayed in Florida, where he started a general contracting business that he said counts police officers among its customers.

"He got away with it," she said when she found out. "That makes me sick to my stomach. It's disgraceful."

SEE IF YOUR LOCAL POLICE FAIL TO CHASE DOWN FUGITIVES

Across the United States, tens of thousands of wanted felons can escape justice by crossing a state border because police agencies have already decided not to retrieve them. These agencies issue non-extradition warrants, which means they will not leave their state to arrest fugitives, even if they are already in custody. See where your state and local agencies stand.



CHAPTER 2

Fugitives go 'scot-free' in New Jersey

THOUSANDS OF FUGITIVES CAN CROSS A BRIDGE
TO GET AWAY

Few places present a clearer illustration of just how easy it is to get away than Philadelphia.

FBI records show that police, prosecutors and court officials here have decided not to collect 93% of the city's wanted felons from anyplace outside Pennsylvania — not from Florida, not even from Camden, N.J., three subway stops from Philadelphia's towering courthouse. For a city whose metropolis sprawls over four states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and a sliver of Maryland), that means people accused of everything from drunken driving to robbery can and do escape serious charges by going home to the suburbs. (Some states, including Pennsylvania, classify some of those crimes as misdemeanors; the FBI counts them as felonies because they can lead to prison sentences of more than a year.)

"People figure I can commit any crime I want, go to New Jersey and just stay there because I have family and no one will come look for me," former Philadelphia district attorney Lynne Abraham said.

The city's extradition practices are at the root of a remarkable criminal diaspora. Nearly 3,000 of the fugitives Philadelphia said it won't pursue across a state border lived in other states at the time they were arrested, a USA TODAY analysis of court records found. At least 414 of them lived in Camden. The addresses are based on what fugitives last reported to the police or court officials.

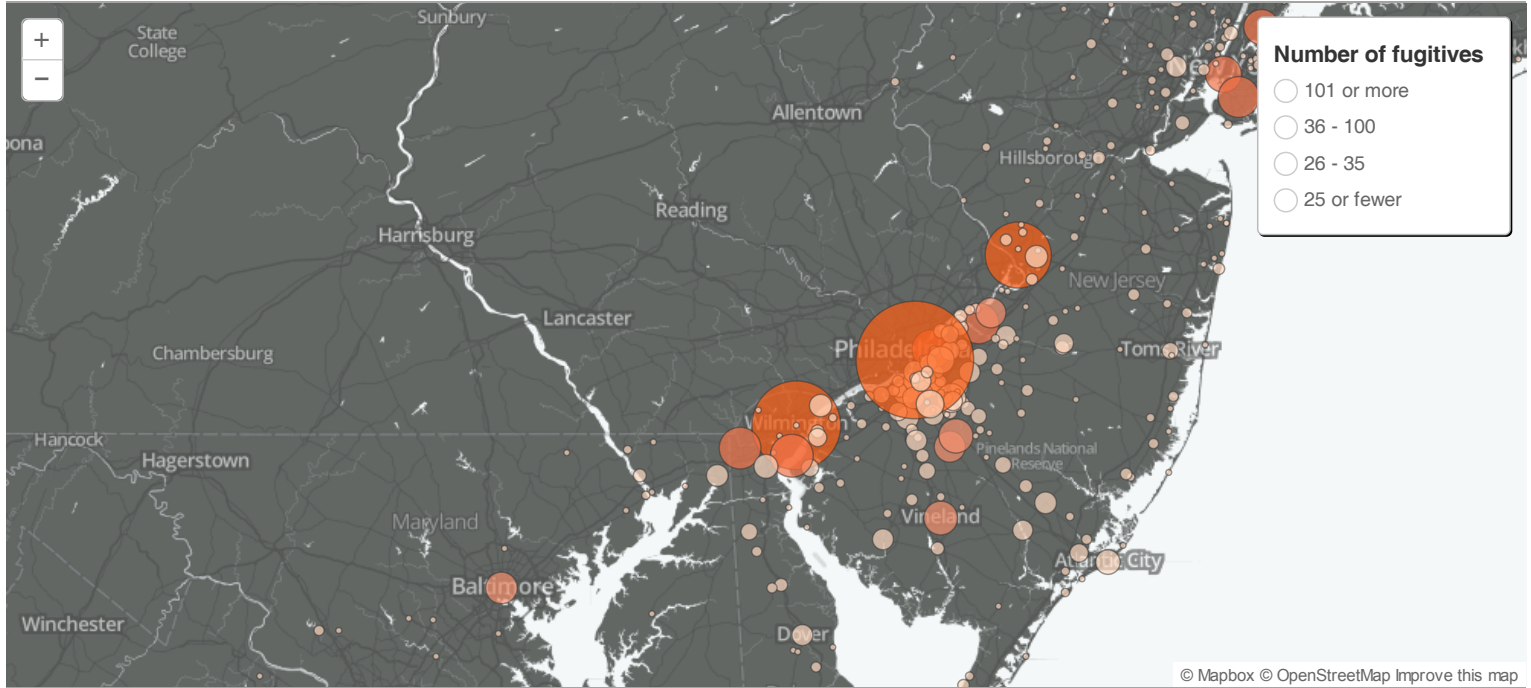
Using court records and telephone directories, USA TODAY tracked them to state prisons, inner-city slums and suburban cul-de-sacs; it found them as far away as San Diego and as close as the Camden jail, whose upper windows look out on Philadelphia's skyline.

The Philadelphia skyline can be seen through bars and glass inside the Camden County (N.J.) Correctional Facility.

(Photo: Eileen Blass, USA TODAY)

PHILADELPHIA FUGITIVES

Nearly 3,000 fugitives wanted in Philadelphia on non-extradition warrants said they lived outside Pennsylvania. Shown are the addresses they provided to Philadelphia's courts.



Sources: Pennsylvania State Police, The Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia police did not pursue Kevin Mena-Carmona, who was charged with cutting someone with a knife (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/998109-b10-0110.html#document/p1/a146660>) during a 2011 robbery, even though he was jailed at least four times in Camden. They didn't go after John Ross, wanted for kissing and fondling (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/844004-ptdc0100.html>) a bedridden 73-year-old stroke victim, when he was arrested in Camden the next year. And they didn't go after Darrell Matthews, who has been wanted in Philadelphia for drunken driving since shortly after he collided with an unmarked police car on his way home from a nightclub in 2001.

"They had their opportunities to come get me. They don't want me," Matthews said. "They were just comfortable with letting me go."

To that, Laurie Malone, the deputy district attorney who supervises extradition in Philadelphia, said: "He's right in his assessment of our decision not to extradite."

"These questions are all legitimate and they're all very good ones, but there are some that I just can't give you good, solid answers that can be understood by the average layperson who does not work in this system and does not understand the full weight of this job," she said.

The result is that Camden police catch and release Philadelphia fugitives "all the time," said Capt. John Fetzer, the head of a sheriff's fugitive-tracking unit there. Most are "pretty much scot-free here as long as they stay here in New Jersey."

Camden is one of only a handful of U.S. cities with a violent crime rate significantly worse than Philadelphia's; the door to the mayor's fourth-floor office there looks out on a line of people waiting to pay fines and post bail. Camden County's jail doesn't count the Philadelphia fugitives it is forced to free because authorities won't cross the river to get them, but jailers say they know it happens routinely.



Captain John Fetzer of the Camden County Sheriff's Office explains how many fugitives fleeing Philadelphia can go 'scot-free' in New Jersey.

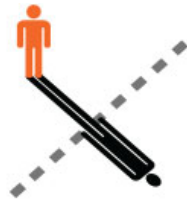
Eileen Blass, Sarah Cartron, Shannon Rae Green, Brad Heath, Steve Elfers

"As a Camden County resident, to the extent we can get people who commit crimes in Philadelphia out of our community and back in Philadelphia, the better off it'll be for us," the jail's warden, David Owens, said.

For police in the New Jersey suburbs, letting Philadelphia fugitives go is so unremarkable that if they run a background check on someone and see a warrant marked as not extraditable, "we don't bother going any further," said Chris Eife, who, until December, supervised extraditions for the Camden County Sheriff's Office.

Many towns along state borders face similar headaches. Police in rural Washington County, Va., have told the FBI they will not extradite some felony suspects whose last known address was in Bristol, Tenn., a twin city whose downtown straddles the state line. Authorities in Augusta, Ga., have declined to retrieve suspects from neighboring South Carolina.

Still, the second in command of the Philadelphia district attorney's office, Ed McCann, said the ease and regularity with which that city's fugitives can escape by traveling to New Jersey suggests something should change. If police there find fugitives who are "dangerous" or repeat offenders, "we should be in discussions with them about a better way to ensure that we're notified and we can consider the extradition," he said.



CHAPTER 3

Cost, red tape complicate corralling of fugitives

PROSECUTORS BLAME LIMITED RESOURCES AND A
TEDIOUS EXTRADITION PROCESS

Every time police officers stop a person on the highway or book him into a jail, they check his name against the FBI's vast fugitive tracking database, known as the National Crime Information Center. The system can tell them within seconds whether the person is wanted, and for what. And it will tell them how far the agency that wants him is willing to travel to pick him up, a decision that police and prosecutors are required to make in advance.

Those records, obtained by USA TODAY, offer the first public accounting of the extradition practices of more than 8,100 law enforcement agencies in big cities and small towns throughout the United States.

The fugitives included 2,610 people accused of drunken driving, 2,036 accused of robbery, 3,347 accused of sex crimes, 6,554 wanted for assault, and 9,254 wanted for fraud as of last May — all marked in FBI records with a code telling police officers not to arrest them if

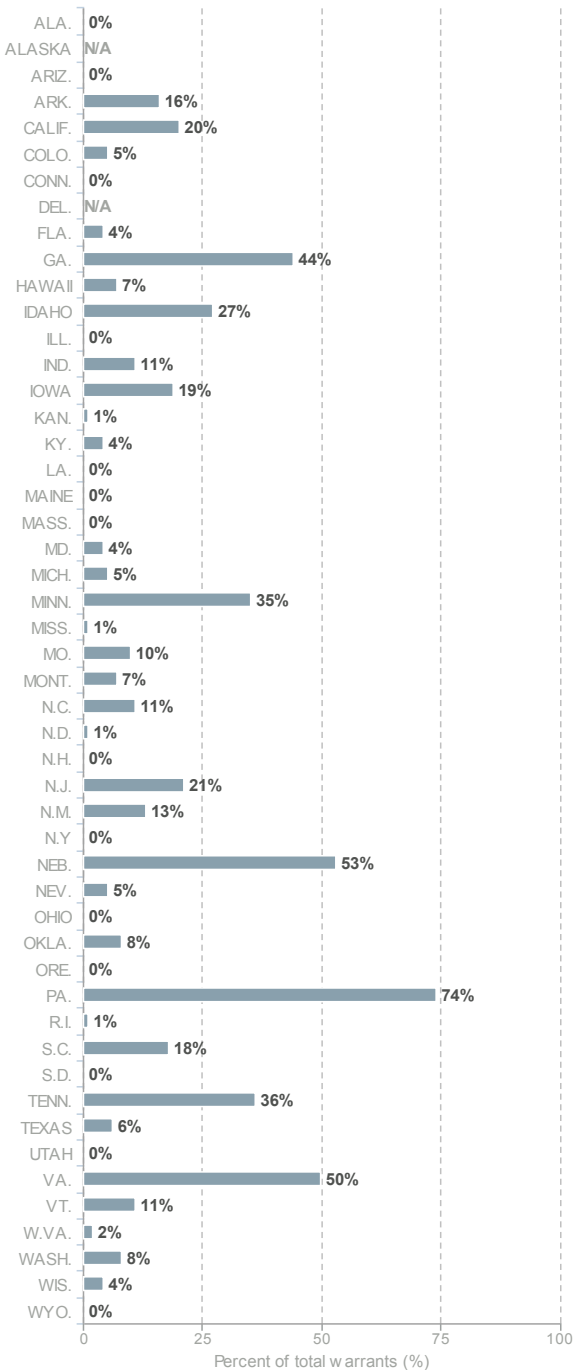
they're found in another state.

The FBI repeatedly refused to provide any information that could identify the fugitives in its database in order to protect their privacy. Some states make it a crime to disclose information from their fugitive databases. The Philadelphia Police Department, like many other agencies, refused to turn over records related to its extradition practices.

Explore non-extradition rates

Percent of felony warrants that are not extraditable.

Assault



Source: FBI

States with fewer than 10 warrants have been excluded

But police and court files nonetheless detail one serious case after another in which police said they would let suspects go if they surfaced in another state: a man wanted for his role in a gunfight outside a Hialeah, Fla., strip club. A man wanted for shooting his girlfriend to death point-blank in a migrant work camp in Collier County, Fla. A man wanted for rape in Roanoke, Va.

Detectives had no difficulty tracking the Roanoke rape suspect, Jerry Lee Wiggins. Not long after a woman accused him of raping her in 2008, police found him locked up in a Jacksonville jail on charges (later dropped) that he had stolen a car. But instead of going to get him, [police reports show](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1060157-140306043823-0001.html#document/p6/a147777) (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1060157-140306043823-0001.html#document/p6/a147777>), authorities waited to see whether two other Virginia counties that wanted Wiggins for probation violations would do it.

Neither did, so a month later, [Wiggins went free](http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1063616-iso-inmate-information-search.html) (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1063616-iso-inmate-information-search.html>).

The city's prosecutor, Commonwealth's Attorney Donald Caldwell, said he wouldn't extradite Wiggins because he "did not feel our case had been particularly strong." Like prosecutors in many other cities, he said extradition makes sense only if he's confident he can win a conviction.

Many cases don't make the cut. Nearly half of Roanoke's felony warrants are listed as not extraditable in the FBI's database.

"When I look at it, I just use the global generic taxpayer. It's still my tax dollars bringing him back. As an elected official, I think you've got an obligation to consider that," he said.

Wiggins, who has since been arrested at least twice in Alabama, could not be reached to comment.

The detective who investigated Wiggins, Dean Boitnott, said he wasn't surprised. "If it's iffy in any way, a lot of times, they'll just let it go, especially in something like rape," because of the he-said-she-said nature of those prosecutions, Boitnott said. "Unless you've got a rock-solid case, a prosecutor's not going to go for it."

Authorities say a cumbersome extradition process leaves them little choice; to extradite more fugitives, they'd have to divert time and money from other cases.

"It's not as simple as they walk up to the middle of the Ben Franklin Bridge and we meet them and bring them back," said John Delaney, who supervises the trial division of the Philadelphia district attorney's office. "State borders are significant."

Part of the difficulty is stitched into the United States' basic political structure. Every state is its own sovereign government, so the police can't drag a suspect from one state to another without his permission. Instead, they need to extradite him, a simplified version of the process the United States uses when it wants to retrieve suspects from Canada or France.

The U.S. Constitution requires that states turn over fugitives to one another, but it doesn't require that the task be simple. Unless a suspect agrees to waive extradition, the signatures of both states' governors and a court order are needed. That means that the paper trail from Camden to Philadelphia winds through the state capitols in Harrisburg and Trenton, a route that can take as little as a few days or as long as four months.



Watch this motion graphic to learn about the extradition process, and how non-extraditable warrants allow fugitives to go free.

Keith Carter, Shannon Rae Green

Still, prosecutors in other parts of Pennsylvania said the process is far less cumbersome than Philadelphia authorities make it out to be. Many fugitives waive formal extradition proceedings and agree to be returned quickly because they don't want to sit in jail waiting to be picked up. A whole industry of contractors has sprung up to transport them, usually charging only a few hundred dollars to pick someone up from as far away as North Carolina.

Pennsylvania law allows the city to bill suspects for the cost of extradition if they're ultimately convicted. And besides all that, Camden's jail is 7 miles closer to the Philadelphia courthouse than Philadelphia's own jail is.

"Really, it's pretty easy. There's paperwork, but it's all just forms," National District Attorneys Association Executive Director Scott Burns said. "For a felony, especially a violent felony, it's unconscionable that you wouldn't come go to get them."

Other approaches are potentially simpler. Bail bondsmen, for example, are typically authorized to haul a suspect back to court, even from other states. But Philadelphia, along with other large cities, has largely stamped out its private bail bonds industry because of a history of abuses.

Records show Philadelphia does extradite some fugitives, particularly those charged with serious offenses like murder and rape. Officials from the district attorney's office said they were unable to determine how often they do so, but Camden County officials said their jail sent 164 people to Pennsylvania last year, though not all of them necessarily went to Philadelphia.

Nationwide, police and prosecutors are becoming less willing to chase suspects into other states as tight budgets force them to further narrow the list of crimes for which they'll extradite. In the nine months between August 2012 and May 2013, the number of felony warrants marked as not extraditable in the FBI's fugitive database increased more than 31%.

"We have a fixed amount of money and we have to be selective about who we spend it on," said Guilford County, N.C., Chief Assistant District Attorney Howard Neumann.

For crime victims, that reality can be dismaying. Robin Samson told the police (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1060996-aten2.html#document/p1/a147778>) her husband stood 4 feet from her and aimed a shotgun at her face the day she tried to leave him in 2010. She stopped packing and ran. Police in Polk County, Fla., charged her husband, Jonathan Aten, with aggravated assault, but they have yet to arrest him. Aten moved to Michigan, and state records show Polk County officials won't pursue him past the state line.

"I don't think they wanted him caught because they didn't want to spend the money to go pick him up," Samson said. "I just want him to be held accountable — for once — for his actions."



CHAPTER 4

Many cities say they'll extradite, then don't

BALTIMORE TURNED DOWN 60% OF EXTRADITION REQUESTS

It is impossible to say whether cities like Philadelphia are unusually reluctant to pursue their fugitives, or merely unusually candid about it.

Despite years of requests from federal authorities, many law enforcement agencies still don't enter all of their fugitives' names (<http://interact.stltoday.com/mds/projects/html/1251>) into the FBI's nearly 50-year-old database, meaning police in other states likely wouldn't know that a person is wanted. For example, the police in Buffalo — which ranks among the nation's most violent big cities — had listed just 59 warrants in the database as of May. Stockton, Calif., a similar-sized and similarly dangerous city, listed more than five times as many.

Other cities claim they will extradite any fugitives from anyplace in the United States, then don't show up to get them. Some high-crime cities like Chicago and Detroit told the FBI that they would extradite suspects on nearly every warrant they entered into the database — about 35,000 as of May — but don't always do so. "Just because they put it in as extraditable doesn't mean they will," Milwaukee County, Wis., Sheriff David Clarke said.

Either way, the result is the same: Fugitives go free.

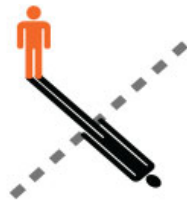
Judges in Washington, D.C., ordered more than 2,400 fugitives to be released over the past decade because the agencies that wanted them — usually suburban counties in Maryland and Virginia — didn't pick them up, USA TODAY found by analyzing the city's court dockets. Even that number almost certainly understates the true number of fugitives the district has put back on the street because it includes only people who were jailed on other states' warrants, and D.C. police are allowed to arrest fugitives only if the authorities have approved extradition.

Baltimore police marked only 1% of their warrants as non-extraditable in the FBI's database. But prosecutors' records (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061130-extradition-information.html>) show they nonetheless have turned down nearly 60% of police requests to extradite suspects back to the city to face charges since 2010. They declined to extradite an kidnapping suspect from California, a robbery suspect from nearby York, Pa., and murder suspects who were caught in Indiana (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061130-extradition-information.html#document/p8/a147820>) and West Virginia (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061130-extradition-information.html#document/p2/a147821>).

Baltimore officials would not identify the suspects. Many did not have to go far: Prosecutors declined to extradite fugitives charged with burglary, assault and resisting arrest. Deputy State's Attorney Elizabeth Embry said that usually means prosecutors thought the case wasn't viable.

But even in that fragmented landscape, warrants marked as not extraditable reflect a peculiar shortcoming. For the most part, they are not accidents or oversights. Each one reflects an upfront decision by the police and prosecutors that the person can get away.

"Other cities are just like we are. They just might not tell the truth about it," said Abraham, the former Philadelphia district attorney.



CHAPTER 5

In cities like Philadelphia, a policy of not policing

LETTING FUGITIVES GO IS USUALLY NO ACCIDENT

Before 2010, most of Philadelphia's fugitives — more than 30,000 people wanted by the police, probation officials and the courts — weren't listed in the FBI's database. Now, most of them are listed automatically along with a code indicating that police won't leave Pennsylvania to pick them up. The only way to change that is if a prosecutor gets approval from two supervisors, something officials say they do only when the charges are especially serious and the likelihood of winning a conviction is high.

They did not do that in 38 cases of sexual assault, 731 robberies, 1,230 cases of assault, 535 burglaries and 1,830 drunken driving cases, according to FBI records. Most of the fugitives USA TODAY tracked down said they knew the police wouldn't pursue them.

"The average person, the average citizen, wouldn't know that," said Shane Littles, wanted since 2007 after he skipped court on charges that he possessed almost a quarter-pound of marijuana with the intent to distribute it. Despite repeated arrests in the New Jersey suburbs, the Philadelphia warrant "just never came up," he said. "I know a lot of guys, they've got plenty of warrants in other states. Sometimes it comes up, sometimes it doesn't come up."

Prosecutors said they stand by their decision not to pursue Littles and most of the rest of the city's fugitives. But they acknowledged they have also overlooked some who should have been approved for extradition.

Michael Laurito is one.

City judges issued two warrants for his arrest after he bolted from the courthouse where he was facing a pair of drunken driving cases in 2011. If he's found guilty — assuming he's ever brought to court — he would rack up his third and fourth drunken driving convictions in Philadelphia. One of those charges could have sent him to prison for at least a year because of Pennsylvania's mandatory sentencing laws for repeat drunken drivers.

Laurito said both arrests were "bogus." Feeling pressured to plead guilty and spend time in jail, he did what thousands of criminal defendants do every year: He walked out of court and drove home to Elkton, Md. "I chose the option that was best for me to provide for my family," he said. "At least I have my head above water, even though I'm taking a gamble."

It may not be much of one. Both warrants were marked for Pennsylvania pickup only, according to state police and FBI records, even though Laurito lives just outside the state, on a quiet street less than an hour's drive from downtown Philadelphia.

"On paper I look like a mass danger on the highway," Laurito said.

Inmates are escorted down a hallway by a corrections officer at the Camden County (N.J.) Correctional Facility.

(Photo: Eileen Blass, USA TODAY)

McCann, Philadelphia's first assistant district attorney, said prosecutors made the wrong call. "If he's looking at a year or more in prison, we should be bringing him back, and that's something we have to constantly reinforce with our assistants," he said. Prosecutors are supposed to review their cases each day to decide whether to seek permission to extradite people who don't show up to court, but McCann said busy lawyers don't always do that. Malone said she asked a supervisor to review Laurito's case.

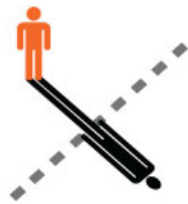
After USA TODAY presented officials with its findings, Malone said she instructed supervisors to review every one of the most serious outstanding warrants to make sure none was overlooked; prosecutors have already approved extradition for several hundred of them. "You made me look at a list that may have gone largely ignored," she said.

Authorities in neighboring Montgomery County, Pa., changed the status of their warrants after USA TODAY contacted them last year about warrants for serious felonies in that county that were marked as not extraditable in FBI records. Deputy District Attorney Steven Latzer said the entries were inadvertent. "The way that was set up was a recipe for disaster," he said, though he added that he was unaware of any fugitives who got away as a result.

Latzer said Montgomery County prosecutors seek extradition in all but the most "extreme" cases. "Just because somebody leaves Pennsylvania means we're not going to prosecute them? That makes no sense to me."

Philadelphia's court system, which maintains a 50-man police force to hunt fugitives, took new steps to track out-of-state fugitives in December. Police still don't go to get the fugitives, but now, every time one is located in another state, they note that fact in court records and send the fugitive a letter asking him to turn himself in.

A handful of suspects have. But for the most part, the records merely memorialize the near-daily messages the city's police send out when their fugitives are found in other states. "DECLINE," officials wrote when a man wanted for aggravated assault and drug possession was found in Atlantic City in February. "NON-EXTRADITABLE. AGENCY IS LOCATED OUT OF STATE."



CHAPTER 6

A mockery of justice

SERIOUS CRIMES GO UNRESOLVED, AND VICTIMS
AREN'T TOLD

Advocates for crime victims say the decision to let fugitives escape is particularly troubling when they are fleeing charges of violent crime or sexual assault.

"It's just wrong. It's a mockery of the justice process," said Will Marling, the executive director of the National Organization for Victim Assistance. In each case, he said, the police have done the work to identify and charge a suspect. Letting him get away so easily "says to victims that this really isn't that important, because otherwise we'd try to do something about it."

But even in those cases, suspects have had no trouble getting away. Police charged Kevin Hinds with raping (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061019-b2-c0036.html>) a neighbor in 1999. The woman testified (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061018-b2-c0053.html#document/p1/a147781>) at a preliminary hearing that when she tried to stop

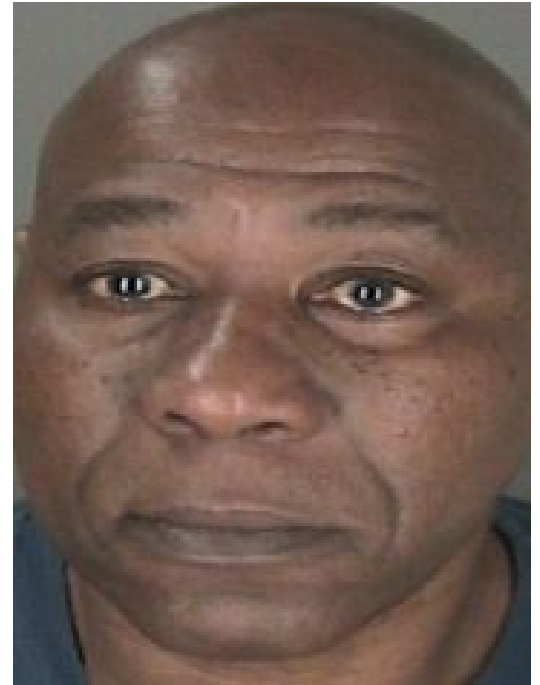
him, Hinds beat her "unmercifully" with his fists until she blacked out. After she escaped down the back steps of his apartment, he threatened to "ax my brothers and my sons," she testified.

It wasn't until six years after Hinds skipped a court hearing, on Oct. 25, 2006, that Philadelphia authorities decided to extradite him if he was ever found. Malone said she couldn't explain officials' change of heart because prosecutors can no longer find his file.

But the only rape warrant Philadelphia authorities entered into the FBI's fugitive database on that day was marked for extradition from surrounding states only. And when Hinds was arrested in Charlotte for trespassing the next year, the sheriff's department let him go after he finished serving a two-day jail sentence, a department spokeswoman said. USA TODAY was unable to locate Hinds to ask him about the charges.

"I understand resource limitations and I understand why they would not want to spend the money to create a problem in their own state, but still, you'd think that rapes, like murders, would be taken more seriously than that," said Scott Berkowitz, president of RAINN, an organization that advocates for sexual assault victims.

Angelo Hall has been wanted in Philadelphia since September 1986 on charges of sexually assaulting



Angelo Hall has been wanted in Philadelphia since September 1986.

(Photo: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services)

(<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1013036-hall-20140107153528541.html#document/p2/a147779>) a Jehovah's Witness, charges that could have sent him to prison for as long as two years.

Two weeks after he was charged in Philadelphia, Hall sodomized a woman in Suffolk County, N.Y., and was sentenced to 25 years (<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1061138-140306223921-0001.html#document/p3/a147832>) in a New York state prison. He got out in 2011 and moved to Rochester, N.Y., where he's registered as a "high risk" sex offender, a fact never related to the woman he is accused of attacking.

Malone could not say why prosecutors decided not to extradite Hall. The case is so old they could not find his file. She said she cannot recall a case in which prosecutors consulted with a crime victim on their decision not to extradite.

Hall said he "doesn't know anything about any Philadelphia charges," before shutting his apartment door on a reporter in January.

But the Rochester police, with whom he is required to register once a year, know about the charges. They can't arrest Hall because Philadelphia authorities won't leave Pennsylvania to get him, Sgt. Jacqueline Shuman, a police spokeswoman, said. "When they want to come get him, we'll arrest him," she said.

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PART 1

The ones that get away

PART 2

A license to commit crime

PART 3

The short arm of the law

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