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On June 26, 2003, San Diego police motorcycle constable Terry Bennett was killed in the line of duty when a stolen flatbed truck driven by a mentally ill man with a long criminal history ran over the veteran officer during a police chase.

Earlier this month, Kevin Gerard Williams, 39, was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole — thanks in large part to evidence enhanced by a Belleville company that proved he ran over the officer intentionally.

The day of the fatal crash, Bennett — who was riding his police motorcycle — started chasing Williams after he stole a GMC flatbed truck from a construction site in San Diego and began driving erratically through the downtown core.

As the pursuit unfolded, Williams made a hard U-turn and used the stolen truck as a battering ram to crush Bennett against a fence. The force of the impact left a distinguishable impression of the officer's shoulder flash and shirt on the bumper of the truck.

Williams was caught in a nearby residential area where he had ditched the truck and attempted to escape on foot.

The story captured headlines across California, placing tremendous pressure on the San Diego District Attorney's office to prove Williams — who initially pleaded not guilty — intended to kill Bennett during the altercation.

"Anytime a police officer is killed in a city our size, it's a big, big deal," said Ron Thill, an investigator with the San Diego District Attorney's office, from San Diego.

With the case about to be presented to the courts last fall, Thill approached OE Technologies Group of Belleville to ask if imaging software could enhance photographic exhibits.

"I came to them in the fall last year ... and sent up several photographs," Thill said. "For us, we want to cover anything and everything we can at a crime scene ... and this was an important piece of the puzzle that had to be put together."

The business, located in Belleville's northeast industrial park, has been developing sophisticated software for police agencies across North America, including the San Diego Police Department.

"They called us last fall and said we have this problem," said company spokesman Craig Bell, while seated in the boardroom of OE Technologies headquarters on Lahr Drive.

"They came up in November, brought all of this information and asked if we could help. I can't tell you specifically how we did it but, through the work we did, they were able to not only prove that he hit the police officer ... but proved his intent to kill (him)."

Thill, meanwhile, explained that within guidelines set out by the court, the crime scene photographs were imported into imaging software, enhanced and overlaid to stand-alone images of the San Diego police shoulder flash. The move proved the driver of the truck ran over the policeman, as the flash was clearly visible on the bumper of the truck on the resulting image.

"An important aspect it also proved was the position of the officer when he was struck — almost under the truck. Without a doubt, it showed that officer Bennett wasn't a threat, because he had jumped off his motorcycle and tried to get away from the guy (Williams). It was a tremendous piece of evidence."

When the new evidence was shown to the accused, he changed his plea.

"It was just fantastic what they did and I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to use them again," Thill added.

Bell, meanwhile, was told the OE Technologies' work was "... really the critical piece of evidence that pushed the case over the top. At that point, he went from pleading not guilty to guilty.

"It's quite an interesting piece of work — it was a very high-profile case ... and (Williams) pulled every trick in the book to say 'I didn't do it' — until he saw what we produced."

The Williams case wasn't the first time OE Technologies has implemented software catered exclusively for law enforcement agencies.

The company has been operating for about 30 years. It began as a sales and service representative for Canon copiers and printers.

While it still services and sells copiers — and is Canada's largest seller of Canon office equipment with branches across Ontario — OE Technologies has become a leader in the development of sophisticated police applications using Liberty IMS imaging software.

"About three years ago, my brother retired from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) after spending 30 years as a serial crime investigator," said OE Technologies president Doug Bell, Craig's father.

Bell's brother said a major issue facing law enforcement agencies in both the United States and Canada is dealing with reams of old files, hand-written notes and pho-