



TANNER ROUSE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
DELAWARE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MEDIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19063



VINCENT FICCHI
CHIEF OF DETECTIVES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 8, 2026

**DELAWARE COUNTY DA TANNER ROUSE ANNOUNCES ARREST AND CHARGES
AGAINST SUSPECT IN GRAVEYARD BURGLARIES**

Media, PA – District Attorney Tanner Rouse announces that charges have been approved against Jonathan Gerlach, 34, of Ephrata, PA. This investigation has been led by Detective Leah Cesanek of the Yeadon Police Department and Detective Chris Karr of Delaware County CID, along with Chief Tony Heidbreder, and K9 handler Kathryn Gerler and K9 Kody of Middle Creek Search and Rescue.

Between November 7, 2025 and January 6, 2026 Detective Cesanek and Detective Karr responded to Mount Moriah Cemetery numerous times in regards to a string of burglarized graves and mausoleums. On January 6, 2026, at approximately 20:00hrs, detectives were conducting surveillance of the cemetery when they observed the suspect's car with numerous bones and skulls in plain view in the back seat of the vehicle. Gerlach was then seen exiting the cemetery holding a burlap bag, crow bar and other assorted items. The offender was brought into custody where he admitted to stealing approximately 30 sets of human remains. A search warrant was issued and executed at the offenders home in Ephrata, PA by CID, Ephrata PD and Middle Creek Search and Rescue. Through investigation it is believed that over 100 full or partial sets of human and skeletal remains have been recovered from Gerlach's home and storage unit in Ephrata. This investigation remains on going.

Following a comprehensive review of the evidence, the Delaware County District Attorney's Office has approved the following charges against Jonathan Gerlach, 34, of Ephrata, PA.

Burglary – Not Adapted for Overnight Accommodation, No Person Present (F1) - 26 counts
Criminal Trespass – Enter Structure (F3) – 26 counts
Criminal Trespass – Enter Structure (F2) – 26 counts
Abuse of Corpse (M2) – 100 counts
Theft By Unlawful Taking (F3) – 100 counts
Receiving Stolen Property (F3) – 100 counts
Intentional Desecration of Public Monument (M2) – 26 counts
Intentional Desecration of Venerated Object (M2) – 26 counts
Intentional Desecration of Historic Lots and Burial Places (M1) – 26 counts
Criminal Mischief – Damage Property (M3) - 26 counts
Defiant Trespasser (S) – 7 counts

On **January 6, 2026**, the offender was apprehended, and is currently remanded to George W. Hill Correctional Facility. Gerlach was set at \$1,000,000 cash. Gerlach has a Preliminary Hearing scheduled for January 20, 2026.

“Detectives walked into a horror movie come to life in that home. It is truly, in the most literal sense of the word, horrific. I grieve for those who are upset by this, who are going through this, who are trying to figure out if it is in fact one of their loved ones.” Said District Attorney Tanner Rouse in a press conference held this afternoon.

The investigation remains ongoing. The District Attorney's Office urges anyone with additional information to contact the lead investigator on this case, Detective Leah Cesanek at 610-623-1500 or Detective Chris Karr at 610-891-4700.

The District Attorney would like to remind everyone that all individuals charged are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

For press inquiries, please contact Kelly Wilson – Public Relations Director, Delaware County District Attorney's Office, 610-891-4185.

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