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CUMBERLAND COUNTY, N.C. (WTVD) -- Twenty-one years after a newborn was wrapped in a plastic bag and tossed out of moving vehicle in Cumberland County, the baby's mother is behind bars.

"It's hard for me to stand up here and talk about it, because you know of the evidence I've seen, the photographs I've seen. No child should be done like that," Sheriff Ennis W. Wright said Friday.

Cumberland County Sheriff's Office announced Thursday that it had made a break in the cold case of "Baby Michael."

Baby Michael was less than 24-hours-old when he died on the side of Canady Pond Road on March 3, 1999. A Fort Bragg soldier found the baby in a plastic trash bag. His umbilical cord was still attached.

"The child was tossed just like a bag of garbage, just laying on the side of the road," Capt. Mike Casey with the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office said in 2009.

The sheriff's office wanted the child to have a name for its burial. So deputies named the child Baby Michael in honor of the Patron Saint of Law Enforcement Officers. He was buried during a ceremony March 30, 1999.

"This was something personal to this sheriff's office. Very personal. We weren't going to stop until we got it solved," Wright said.

Law enforcement continued to work tirelessly to identify the baby's mother, but for over 20 years, they had no luck.

But detectives got a break in the case when Baby Michael's DNA was sent to Bode Technology, a company that specializes in forensic genealogy services.

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The DNA led investigators to Burke County to interview 54-year-old Deborah Riddle O'Conner. Once there, O'Conner admitted that she was Baby Michael's mother.

O'Conner was charged with first-degree murder and booked into the Cumberland County Detention Center where she is being held on no bond.

Charles O'Conner, her husband, told [ABC-affiliate WSOC](#) investigators showed up to their home in Burke County and questioned his wife in their yard for about 30 minutes. He said he married Deborah O'Conner about 10 years ago and said he had no idea about the case.

"I've had spell crying," Charles O'Conner said. "I haven't slept all night."

Charles O'Conner said he believes his wife has mental health issues.

District Attorney Billy West said, if convicted, Deborah O'Conner faces a punishment of life in prison and could actually face the death penalty depending on if any other factors arise during the investigation.

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