



# FEDERAL NOTES

## NERONHA'S NOTE

Friends and Colleagues,

The good news is, given the weather, it's not too late to issue the "Winter 2013" edition of *Federal Notes*. The bad news is, it's still winter . . . .



U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha

First and foremost, congratulations to Cumberland Chief John Desmarais on assuming the Presidency of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association in January. I had a great time

at the installation dinner, and I wish John, and the Association's new Vice-President, Richmond Chief Elwood Johnson, much success in the months ahead. As I learned at the Association Meeting just this week, there is quite a bit on the Association's plate!

This edition of *Federal Notes* reflects, again, the strong partnership we have developed with our local, state and federal partners in our ongoing efforts to protect the citizens of Rhode Island. A great example, among many, is the work of the ICAC in the *Jones* case (featured on this page), which resulted in a life sentence after trial for a dangerous child predator. Congratulations to the Rhode Island State Police Detectives, Detectives from the Coventry, Johnston, Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick, and West Warwick Police

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## LIFE SENTENCE REFLECTS WORK OF INTERNET TASK FORCE

A federal judge sentenced **Donald J. Jones III** to life imprisonment for traveling interstate to engage in sex with a minor. The sentence culminated an investigation by the Rhode Island Interstate Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), which pursues predators who use the Internet to prey on children.



Jones posted a message in an adult Internet forum seeking a parent willing to allow him to have sex with a pre-pubescent child. A Postal Inspector assigned to ICAC discovered the post and, pretending to be the parent of an eight-year old girl, responded to Jones.

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### ANOTHER ICAC CASE—PAGE 3

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After several weeks of e-mails and phone conversations, including one with a female Providence Police officer posing as the young girl, Jones boarded a bus from Philadelphia to Providence. ICAC agents arrested him as he stepped off the bus at Kennedy Plaza. Jones had with him a laptop computer and a thumb drive containing child pornography.

A federal jury convicted Jones of travelling interstate to engage in sex with a minor, possessing and transporting child pornography and related charges. Because Jones had a prior conviction in New Jersey for sexually exploiting a young girl, a life sentence was mandatory under federal law.

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***NERONHA'S NOTE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)***

Departments, and Special Agents from ICE, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Naval.

Criminal Investigative Service for contributing resources to the important work of this federally-funded task force.

There is much else to talk about and not enough room to do so here. Challenges in the months ahead will no doubt include how to effectively reduce gun violence, including school safety (see the outstanding seminar hosted by the State Police just last week) and more complete background checks for firearms purchasers. As state marijuana laws change and medical marijuana dispensaries come on line, predictable and unpredictable issues will arise. Please know that my door is always open and my phone is always on, so if there is any way that I can assist with these or other issues please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best,

Peter

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**ICAC TASK FORCE (CONTINUED)**

“In addition to preventing this particular pedophile from further targeting children, a life sentence should send a clear message to others who may choose to follow the same path he did,” said Colonel Steven G. O’Donnell, Superintendent of the State Police. “I commend the prosecutors, troopers, local police and federal agents for their continued vigilance in tracking, arresting and prosecuting those who prey on our children.”



The ICAC Task Force is comprised of State Police detectives, detectives from the Providence, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick, Johnston and Pawtucket Police Departments, and federal agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Formed in 2003, it is funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

According its Mission Statement, The ICAC Task Force “is committed to protecting children through combatting crimes against children via the Internet by the vigorous investigation and prosecution of offenders.” The Task Force also uses community outreach to educate students about Internet safety and responsibility.

Housed in the State Police Computer Crimes Unit, the Rhode Island ICAC is one of 61 federally funded ICAC task forces in the country. Since 2008, ICAC has conducted 733 investigations, made 186 arrests, and referred 33 cases for federal prosecution, with the balance prosecuted by the state.

*Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stephen G. Dambruch and Leslie J. Kane prosecuted the Jones case.*

# CRIMINAL DOCKET SHEET

## Former legislator and business partner sentenced for tax evasion

State Representative **John J. McCauley** and **William L'Europa** operated McCauley and L'Europa Public Adjusters, LLC and PIA Restoration, LLC. The two under-reported business receipts by nearly \$1.8 million over a three year period and thus under-paid federal taxes by more than \$500,000. They pleaded guilty to tax evasion. McCauley was sentenced to 27 months in federal prison and fined \$10,000. L'Europa was also sentenced to 27 months in prison. Both are required to file amended returns for the tax years 2007 through 2011 and pay appropriate back taxes and penalties. The case resulted from a joint investigation by the IRS, Criminal Investigation, ATF, FBI, Rhode Island State Police and the Providence Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys William J. Ferland and Sandra R. Hebert.*



## Armed robbery at a bank leads to guilty pleas, prison sentence

**Louis Peters** of Vermont and **Craig Carey** of Fall River accosted at gunpoint employees of a West Greenwich bank. When the manager could not open the vault, the two men ordered bank employees to empty the contents of all the cash drawers into a black bag. The pair fled with \$82,000. A witness called police after seeing two masked men exit the bank. West Greenwich Police officers and a Rhode Island State trooper arrested Peters in a vehicle and arrested Carey as he emerged from some woods. Both pleaded guilty to armed bank robbery, conspiracy and related charges. Peters was sentenced to ten years in federal prison. Carey awaits sentencing. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stephen G. Dambruch and Sandra R. Hebert.*



## East Providence man sentenced for child pornography

**Robert Chase**, 25, had been arrested twice for failing to register as a sex offender. Chase, from East Providence, was residing in Coventry when he was most recently arrested for failure to register. After his arrest, a former roommate, gathering Chase's belongings, found a disk with more than 12,000 images of child pornography on it. Coventry Police were alerted and, after an investigation by the ICAC task force, Chase was charged with possession of child pornography. When ICAC agents arrested him, he had additional digital media devices containing more than 600 still images and 100 videos of child pornography. He pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography and a federal judge sentenced him to 51 months in prison, followed by lifetime court supervision. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein.*



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## CRIMINAL DOCKET SHEET

### Dominican national sentenced in scheme to traffic in identities

**Rafael Lara-Mejia**, a Dominican national living in Providence, was one of 50 people charged in a federal indictment in Puerto Rico in a scheme to obtain and sell the identity documents of U.S. citizens from Puerto Rico. Social Security cards and corresponding documents sold for prices ranging from \$700 to \$2,500. Lara-Mejia admitted in federal court in Providence that he and coconspirators sold identity documents to between 25 and 99 undocumented aliens and others. Some buyers used the false identification to commit financial fraud. A federal judge sentenced him to two years in prison and he is subject to deportation proceedings. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard B. Myrus; Criminal Division Trial Attorneys James Yoon and Sarah Chang.*



### Two Hobbs Act robberies net career offender 26-year sentence

**Alphonso Johnson** robbed a convenience store clerk at gunpoint of cash, cigarettes and a box of cigars. Two days later, he robbed a West End restaurant owner at gunpoint of \$4,300 in cash. He assaulted her with the pistol and kicked her before fleeing. Shortly after that robbery, Providence Police officers found him hiding between two parked cars. He was arrested after a short foot chase and a brief struggle. He pleaded guilty to armed robbery and firearms offenses. Johnson, 39, had previous adult offenses that included firearms violations, assault and drug possession. The nature of the robberies and his prior record greatly increased his sentencing range, and a federal judge sentenced him to 312 months in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose.*



### Twice deported alien sentenced to 21 months for illegal reentry

After two drug convictions, Alejandro Liranzo-Sanchez, a Dominican national, was deported in 1993. He re-entered the U.S. and was again deported. He flew into Logan Airport in 2003, presented a Puerto Rico birth certificate, and fled the airport while awaiting a secondary Immigration inspection. In 2012, ICE agents arrested him in Providence, where he was living under an assumed name. He pled guilty to illegal reentry and a federal judge sentenced him to 21 months in prison. He is again subject to deportation. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Zechariah Chafee.*





# APPELLATE BRIEFS



## Appeals Court affirms firearms conviction in armed struggle with trooper

The First Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the firearms conviction of **Arjusz Roszkowski**, who was involved in an armed confrontation with an undercover Rhode Island State Police detective. Roszkowski called a person who he thought was an illegal firearms dealer, but was actually a State Police detective. Roszkowski asked about buying two firearms and ammunition that he said he wanted for home defense. They arranged a meeting for the next day. When they met at Lincoln Woods State Park, the undercover detective noticed a handgun in Roszkowski's waistband. He identified himself and attempted to arrest Roszkowski, who drew his handgun. During a struggle, Roszkowski fired his gun, wounding himself. With the assistance of other troopers, the detective subdued and arrested Roszkowski. After a trial, in which Roszkowski represented himself, a federal jury convicted him of being a felon in possession of a firearm and possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number. A federal judge sentenced him to 180 months in prison.



Roszkowski raised several evidentiary issues on appeal, including an argument of entrapment, which the Circuit Court rejected, stating that the evidence suggested that Roszkowski had been the target of a successful sting operation. He also challenged the interstate commerce clause foundation of the federal firearms statute, an argument that the Circuit also rejected. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald C. Lockhart; Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen G. Dambruch and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Pamela Chin.*

## North Providence attorney's bribery conspiracy conviction upheld

A federal jury convicted **Robert Ciresi**, a disbarred lawyer and a former North Providence town solicitor, of facilitating a scheme to bribe three North Providence town councilors in zoning matters. A federal judge sentenced him to 63 months in prison. On appeal, Ciresi argued that statements recorded by a fourth town councilor who was cooperating with the government should not have been admitted as evidence. He argued that the statements were hearsay and violated his Sixth Amendment right to confront witnesses against him.

The First Circuit rebuffed Ciresi's arguments, finding that the recorded statements had been properly admitted as evidence: they were part of a continuing offense and thus not hearsay, and they were made in furtherance of the conspiracy scheme. The Circuit upheld Ciresi's conviction and sentence. The Supreme Court subsequently declined to hear Ciresi's case.



Former town councilors Joseph S. Burchfield, Raymond L. Douglass III and John A. Zamborano pled guilty to federal charges for their roles in the scheme and are serving federal prison sentences ranging from 64 to 78 months. A North Providence businessman, Edward Imondi, admitted that he acted as a middle-man and was sentenced to a year in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald C. Lockhart; Assistant Attorney's John P. McAdams and Terrence P. Donnelly.*

# FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CASES

## Felon wanted guns to prepare for “Doomsday”

**Peter Laporte** was a four-time convicted felon and prohibited by federal law from possessing firearms. By his own admission, he wanted to stockpile firearms to prepare for “Doomsday.” He orchestrated the purchase of 10 weapons and a significant quantity of ammunition by using his wife as a straw purchaser. He accompanied her to the gun dealership and advised her about which weapons to buy — 9 millimeter pistols, a revolver, two semi-automatic assault rifles, two shotguns, another rifle and more than 750 rounds of ammunition. He went back to the store with his wife to pick up the guns and was arrested when he returned again to pick up ammunition. Laporte pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of firearms and awaits sentencing. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Milind M. Shah.*



## Crack in a pot and a gun under a pillow lead to 6-year prison sentence

As part of a drug-trafficking investigation, Providence Police detectives executed a search warrant at **Devin Isom’s** apartment. As detectives entered, Isom threw a cooking pot out a window. The pot, which officers retrieved, contained about 43 grams of crack cocaine that Isom had been cooking. Elsewhere in the apartment, officers found marijuana, Ecstasy, oxycodone and a 9 millimeter handgun with hollow-point bullets in the magazine. The gun was stashed beneath a pillow on a bed. Isom had prior felony convictions for breaking and entering. He pleaded guilty to drug trafficking and being a felon in possession of a firearm, and a federal judge sentenced him to 72 months in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul F. Daly, Jr.*



## Traffic stop on I-95 leads to firearms and a felon in possession

Two Rhode Island State troopers stopped a car for speeding on I-95 in Richmond. **Messiah McGauley** of Boston was driving and a woman was a passenger. After a trooper asked the occupants to exit the vehicle, he noticed the grip of a handgun on the front floor of the vehicle. McGauley was initially charged in state district court and released on bond. A federal charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm was later filed. When troopers, deputy U.S. Marshals and Boston Police officers went to arrest McGauley at his home, they found a rifle in a kitchen pantry and ammunition of various calibers. McGauley was previously convicted in Massachusetts of felony weapons offenses, assault on a police officer and drug trafficking. He pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and a federal judge sentenced him to 57 months in prison. *First Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth P. Madden and Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen G. Dambruch.*



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## FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CASES

### Illegal gun sales lead to four-year prison sentence

**Neftali Melendez** was one target of a joint investigation by ATF and Woonsocket Police into illegal arms trafficking in Woonsocket. He sold a .25 caliber pistol and a .38 caliber revolver in transactions that agents monitored and recorded. Melendez has prior felony drug and firearms convictions. He pleaded guilty to two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm, and a federal judge sentenced him to 46 months in prison.



*Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose.*



### Felon sentenced to eight years in prison for drugs, guns

Providence Police executed a search warrant at **Juan Colon**'s residence. As detectives entered, Colon ran into the bedroom and tried to hide a handgun, but a detective saw the gun and detained Colon. In the apartment, detectives seized 13 bags of marijuana, some crack cocaine, a digital scale and other drug-trafficking material. In a hallway closet, a detective found about 150 rounds of ammunition of various calibers. In two cars outside the residence, detectives found two pistols. Police also seized \$19,000 in cash. A federal jury in Providence found him guilty of drug trafficking, being a felon in possession of a firearm, and possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number. Colon has prior convictions in New York for drug trafficking and firearms violations. A federal judge sentenced him to 96 months in prison. *Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul F. Daly, Jr.*



### Woonsocket drug trafficker, a repeat offender, sentenced to 22 years in prison

**Robert O. Robinson** ran a drug trafficking operation out of the Talus Bar in Woonsocket. He took orders at the bar, and either he or a co-conspirator delivered the drugs. Robinson's activities became the subject of a joint investigation by Woonsocket Police and ATF into drug trafficking in the city. A jury found him guilty of trafficking in about ten ounces of crack cocaine. In addition, he was found to be in violation of a supervised release from a previous federal drug trafficking conviction. Robinson was sentenced to 22 years in federal prison.



The joint ATF-Woonsocket Police investigation netted 16 arrests and the seizure of more than three dozen firearms. Among those arrested were four codefendants in Robinson's ring. **Richard Marks**, **Jason Roman** and **Courtney Desrochers** were sentenced to prison terms; **Tonia Rawlinson** was sentenced to home confinement and probation. *Assistant U.S. Attorneys Richard W. Rose and Ly T. Chin.*

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