



Department of Justice

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DOJ Charges More Than 500 Domestic Violence-Related Firearm Cases in FY20

Eastern District of Kentucky has charged 11 cases since 2017

LEXINGTON, Ky. – The Department of Justice announced on Wednesday it has charged more than 500 domestic violence cases involving firearms during Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

A Department priority since 2019 when Attorney General William P. Barr created the Department of Justice's first ever-[Domestic Violence Working Group](#), these charges are the result of the critical law enforcement partnership between United States Attorneys' Offices and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, led by Acting Director Regina Lombardo, who has made domestic violence firearms-related investigations a priority.

“Keeping firearms out of the hands of dangerous criminal offenders is one of the Department of Justice’s top priorities,” said Attorney General Barr. “This is especially important when it comes to individuals with prior domestic violence convictions. The statistics are clear that when domestic violence offenders have access to guns, their partners and their families are at much greater risk of falling victim to gun violence. In fact, in some communities across America, roughly half of the homicides are related to domestic violence. The Department of Justice is committed to keeping guns out of the hands of those who are prohibited from having them, and we will continue investigating and prosecuting all domestic violence firearms related crimes.”

“According to the CDC, data suggests that about one in six homicide victims are killed by an intimate partner,” said ATF Acting Director Lombardo. “Nearly half of female homicide victims in the U.S. are killed by a current or former male intimate partner. ATF is committed to aggressively pursuing prohibited possession of firearms due to domestic violence convictions and certain protective orders. It is another way we prevent violent gun crime within our communities.”

Locally, since October 2017, the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Kentucky has brought eleven cases, including two cases in 2020, against defendants charged with unlawfully possessing a firearm after a conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence

or who were subject to a qualifying protective order. In 2020, two defendants have been sentenced for domestic violence and firearms related convictions.

Shawn Lee Perkins, of Montgomery County, was sentenced in August 2020 to serve 78 months in prison after pleading guilty to possessing a firearm after having been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, among other charges. Perkins admitted in his plea agreement that in 2018 and 2019 he knowingly possessed several firearms after being convicted of Assault Fourth Degree-Domestic Violence in Fleming County, Kentucky in 2011. After serving his sentence, Perkins will serve a period of supervised release for 3 years.

Scott Kirk Koehler, of Lexington, was sentenced in May 2020 to the equivalent of 18 months in prison, after pleading guilty to unlawfully possessing a firearm while subject to a domestic violence order. In his plea agreement, Koehler admitted that on April 30, 2018, he possessed five firearms while he was subject to an Emergency Protection Order, a domestic violence order issued by the Fayette County District Court in July 2015. Koehler was arrested by ATF in September 2018 and ordered to be held in custody pending resolution of his federal charges. Koehler is on supervised release for a period of 18 months.

“A firearm unlawfully possessed by a domestic abuser is a recipe for deadly violence and tragedy,” said U.S. Attorney Duncan. “Reducing gun violence, including domestic violence related firearms offenses, is a fundamental priority for my Office and the Department of Justice. I am proud to serve as a member of the Attorney General’s Domestic Violence Working Group, to help further the Department’s efforts to use federal firearms prosecutions to prevent domestic violence.”

Under federal law, individuals with domestic violence misdemeanor and felony convictions, as well as individuals subject to domestic violence protective orders, are prohibited from possessing firearms. The data shows that offenders with domestic violence in their past pose a high risk of homicide. In fact, domestic violence abusers with a gun in the home are five times more likely to kill their partners.

The Working Group, chaired by U.S. Attorney Erin Nealy Cox, of the Northern District of Texas, disseminates legal guidance on keeping guns out of the hands of domestic violence abusers using three federal statutes:

- 18 USC § 922 (g)(1), felon in possession of a firearm
- 18 USC § 922 (g)(9), possession of a firearm by a prohibited person (misdemeanor crime of domestic violence)
- 18 USC § 922 (g)(8), possession of a firearm while subject to a domestic violence protective order

Based on the Working Group’s guidance, in FY 2020, U.S. Attorneys’ Offices nationwide brought 337 domestic violence felon-in-possession charges, 54 possession while subject to a protective order charges, and 142 possession by a prohibited person charges.

For more information on domestic violence or to get help, visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) website or call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at [www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years](#).

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