



U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

On December 15, 2010, our Office sponsored the first-ever conference in the District of Connecticut on the prevention of violence against women. Hosted by the University of New Haven, the conference brought together over 150 participants, including victim advocates, local, state and federal prosecutors law enforcement officers, and domestic violence services providers. The goal of the conference was to offer best practices and establish new partnerships in order to most effectively respond to violence against women, including the alarming new trends of cyber stalking and cyber bullying.

Domestic violence crimes have a corrosive effect on our families and communities. Disturbing statistics about domestic violence include the following:

- One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.
- An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.
- 85% of domestic violence victims are women.
- Historically, females have been most often victimized by someone they knew.
- Females 20-24 years of age are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence.
- Most cases of domestic violence are never reported to the police.

Like so many other crime problems, domestic violence can best be addressed if we in the law enforcement community work together – across local, state and federal lines – to pool our resources and find the best approach for each case. Most often, that will involve a state enforcement approach, but sometimes a federal enforcement strategy can be most effective.

The December 15 conference was an important first step in drawing on the great partnerships we have with our state counterparts in so many other areas (e.g., gun violence, child exploitation, financial fraud), and working together to best address this serious problem. The conference began with an overview of potential charges under the Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) and the federal tools available to investigate and charge interstate domestic violence and firearms crimes. Panelists also discussed certain cybercrime statutes and how these can be used to stop offenders from harassing and threatening their victims while trying to hide behind the relatively anonymity of the Internet.

In order to highlight the good that can come from working together, AUSAs Chris Mattei and Steve Reynolds discussed two recent and successful VAWA cases that were prosecuted federally, with critical assistance provided by partners in state or local law enforcement. First, AUSA Mattei and ATF Special Agent Kurt Wheeler discussed *United States v. Rory Joseph*. In December 2009, Joseph pleaded guilty to illegal possession of a firearm while being subject to a restraining order, and on June 24, 2010, he was sentenced by to the maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment followed by three years supervised release. In 2009, defendant Joseph had been convicted in state court of domestic violence charges, had been placed on state probation and was subject to a protective order that barred him from harassing, stalking, or threatening the victim. Joseph nevertheless solicited an individual to violently assault the victim, and in April 2009, while still attempting to arrange the assault on the victim, he purchased a Smith & Wesson .38 special revolver. The presentation of this case, and the discussion that followed, also focused on the importance of involving the victim in the process from the beginning and ensuring that the victim's safety is the prosecution team's number one priority.

AUSA Stephen Reynolds and retired Postal Inspector Thomas Lambert next discussed *United States v. Anthony Perone*. In May 2006, Perone sent disturbing letters to a female with whom he had attended 3rd and 4th grade nearly ten years prior. The letters contained threats to kill and injure the victim and her family. During a search of Perone's residence in Minnesota, officers seized materials demonstrating that Perone was on the path to acting on his threats, including a recently purchased assault rifle with a scope; a backpack filled with hundreds of rounds of ammunition; and documents suggesting imminent travel to Connecticut as well as research on his intended victims. At sentencing, the court granted the government's motion for an upward departure and sentenced Perone to a statutory maximum of ten years. The presentation of the case focused on the charges brought, and the disposition of the case, including the entry of a protective order pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §1514, to protect the victims after the conclusion of Perone's incarceration and the termination of his supervised release.

The conference also included cutting-edge presentations by Lieutenant Joseph Rampola from the Park Ridge, New Jersey Police Department, and Lieutenant Kris Carlson of the Burlington, Vermont Police Department, on Augmented Reality, Virtual Worlds and Social Networks. Their discussions of the dark side of the changing digital landscape revealed the relative ease with which stalkers, predators and criminals can use emerging technology against their victims.

The highlight of the day was a presentation by the extraordinarily courageous Jessica Brown, the victim in the *Rory Joseph* case, whose moving presentation about her experiences resulted in a standing ovation. Ms. Brown's discussion about her experiences as a survivor was not only empowering for her – she gave every victim of domestic violence a voice that day. She reminded us of the importance of listening to the victims when we prosecute these cases and doing everything we can to help women become survivors and not part of tragic statistics.

During the course of the conference we announced our intent to create a domestic violence working group in Connecticut, and we look forward to Susan B. Cabon, the Director of the United States Justice Department's Office of Violence Against Women, joining us in the

Spring for a kick-off meeting of the working group. Our hope is that the conference opens lines of communication and that we will continue to make partnerships with federal, state and local law enforcement so that we can most effectively combat domestic violence and prevent violence against women.

If you have any questions about the federal domestic violence laws or federal victim services, please contact Alina P. Reynolds, our Violence Against Woman Act Coordinator, at (203) 696-3000, or Victim Witness Coordinator Linda Corrado at (203) 821-3700.

Thank you.

David B. Fein