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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein Says City Prosecutors Continue to Prioritize Violent Crime and Domestic Abuse Cases

Shares several recent cases highlighting the City Attorney's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit's work to deliver justice for victims and hold violent offenders accountable for their crimes

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced city prosecutors won convictions in several recent domestic violence cases, including a potentially deadly case where the defendant stalked and pulled a gun on his victim, threatening to shoot her in front of multiple family members. The cases highlight a continued priority placed on these types of cases by City Attorney Klein and city prosecutors, who work to interrupt the cycle of domestic violence and deliver accountability for criminals. In 2023, the city's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit prosecuted more than 7,000 domestic violence cases and have prosecuted 1,200 so far this year. 159 of these cases involved a firearm or other weapon.

“Domestic violence is the most serious crime my office prosecutes and we take these cases very seriously. Disrupting the cycle of violence in these cases is oftentimes a matter of life and death,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“Every victim is worthy of justice, and I am thankful for all the work that the Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit does every day to secure convictions and hold violent abusers accountable. Prosecuting domestic abuse and violent crime remains my top priority as City Attorney.”**

City Attorney Klein highlighted three recent cases he says illustrate the lethality of violence faced by survivors every day and the levels of accountability being pushed by his office, including jail time, stringent probation terms, mandatory counseling, and getting deadly firearms out of the hands of these violent individuals—all in an effort to end the violence and save lives.

In the first case highlighted by City Attorney Klein, the defendant, Mr. Jeremiah Sloan, 27, of Columbus, pleaded guilty to charges of misdemeanor aggravated menacing and domestic violence for pointing a loaded gun at his ex-girlfriend's face while she was visiting the defendant's mother's house. Mr. Sloan threatened to pull the trigger and shoot the victim, even as the defendant's mother and aunt tried to get between the defendant and victim. The defendant eventually pushed them aside then stole the victim's phone and fled the scene.

In the victim's final statement before the court, she described the assault as a terrorizing experience that she would not wish upon anyone else. Mr. Sloan was ordered to serve five days in jail and the remainder of his jail sentence suspended for two years of reporting probation, which includes an order prohibiting contact with the survivor, a prohibition on owning a firearm or ammunition, random drug screenings and mandated counseling.

Another domestic violence conviction noted by City Attorney Klein involves the case of defendant Mr. Paul Ciepel, 43, of Columbus, who physically assaulted his victim, causing severe bruising to her face. The defendant fled the scene of the attack with the victim, transporting her to a hotel where Columbus Police intercepted the defendant and victim after a friend of the victim contacted CPD. Officers escorted Mr. Ciepiel from the premises, at which point the victim was able to recount the assault to officers. The defendant pleaded guilty to a first degree misdemeanor domestic violence charge and sentenced to two years of probation where the defendant cannot possess firearms or ammunition.

The third case highlighted by City Attorney Klein involves defendant Mr. Praxedis Reyes, 41, of Columbus, who brutally assaulted his victim in front of a crowd of people in the Short North in May 2023. When police responded, they initially thought the victim had been shot given the amount of blood at the scene. Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit advocates worked with the victim throughout the process, ensuring she had the tools she needed to pursue justice in this case. Mr. Reyes pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor criminal mischief charge, resulting in two years reporting probation where the defendant is prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition and must attend mandated counseling.

“The facts of these cases illustrate the lethality of violence perpetrated against victims and the work that goes into interrupting the cycle of violence, especially when it comes to the real barriers that exist for many survivors who want to come forward to seek justice,” said Mary Lynn Caswell, the Director of the City's Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit. **“Any time our team is able to secure real accountability and remove deadly firearms from these violent offenders is a win for survivors, their families and the residents of Columbus.”**

Editor's notes: Case numbers are as follows: 23CRB 9267 (Sloan), 22CRB8240 (Ciepiel), and 23CRB7101 (Reyes)