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ALABAMA ICE PROGRAM TARGETS MONTGOMERY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA – Leura G. Canary, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama, and the Montgomery Police Department held a press conference today to recognize the efforts of local and federal law enforcement to address domestic violence (DV) in Montgomery. Pursuant to the Department of Justice’s Project Safe Neighborhood initiative, known locally as Alabama ICE, the U.S. Attorney’s Office has partnered with the Montgomery County Task Force on Domestic Violence’s TARGET Program to prosecute DV offenders who violate federal gun laws. At a ceremony Friday morning, the Montgomery Police Department’s Domestic Violence Unit Commander, Lieutenant Steve Searcy, presented TARGET Awards to Montgomery Police Department patrol officer Dennis A. Savoie and to the United States Marshal’s Service (USMS) Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force for their efforts in domestic violence cases. The TARGET Award is presented annually to recognize contributions to the success of the Montgomery County Task Force on Domestic Violence’s TARGET Program, which aims to decrease domestic violence involving firearms through a coordinated community response.

Officer Savoie was recognized for his efforts in the federal prosecution of Maurice Anderson. Anderson had a history of domestic violence complaints and was under a domestic violence protection order when Officer Savoie responded to a domestic disturbance call

involving Anderson and his ex-girlfriend on October 16, 2007. At the scene, Officer Savoie learned that Anderson maintained an assault rifle in the car he had driven to his ex-girlfriend's apartment. Officer Savoie located and seized a loaded AK-47 from Anderson's car. Because Anderson was under a domestic violence protection order at the time, Anderson was prohibited from possessing a firearm under federal law. After Officer Savoie seized the firearm, the case was referred to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) for investigation of Anderson's federal gun crimes. Anderson was arrested on a federal complaint and detained without bond. Anderson pled guilty and, on March 6, 2008, he was sentenced to serve 24 months in federal prison.

Lieutenant Searcy also presented a TARGET award to the USMS Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force for its efforts in apprehending various domestic violence offenders. The USMS Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force has worked closely with Lieutenant Searcy to apprehend domestic violence fugitives. For example, the Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force captured William Friendly, III, in September 2007, shortly after he broke into his ex-girlfriend's apartment and shot her multiple times with a .45 caliber pistol. Since Friendly had several prior felony convictions at the time, it violated federal law for Friendly to possess a firearm and/or ammunition. After Friendly's capture by the Fugitive Task Force, he was prosecuted in federal court through the Alabama ICE program for being a felon in possession of the ammunition used to shoot his ex-girlfriend. The gun was not located, but used shell casings were recovered from the scene. Friendly pled guilty in federal court to being a felon illegally in possession of ammunition and was sentenced on June 12, 2008, to 10 years in federal prison, the maximum sentence permissible under federal law. Friendly has state charges pending against him for the shooting. He could face additional time if convicted on the state charges.

Friendly is one of several domestic violence fugitives apprehended by the USMS Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force during the last year. The Fugitive Task Force has time and again proven itself a critical link in the local and federal partnership formed to prosecute, apprehend and imprison DV offenders who commit acts of gun violence.

United States Attorney Leura G. Canary commented on her commitment to protecting victims of domestic violence as follows: “The Alabama ICE program is committed to reducing domestic violence through vigilant enforcement of federal firearms laws. Domestic violence offenders who illegally possess guns are subject to prosecution in federal court for federal gun crimes and face stiff prison sentences without eligibility for parole. The law enforcement community in Montgomery, local and federal, is united in its efforts to reduce domestic violence.”

Explaining the purpose of the TARGET Program, Lieutenant Steve Searcy, Commander of the Montgomery Police Department’s Domestic Violence Unit, stated, “What we know is that if a firearm is involved in a family or intimate assault, that case is 12 times more likely to end in death and over 60% of homicide cases involving separation violence involved a gun. The TARGET Program was developed to identify these high-risk cases involving firearms and provide immediate safety to the victim through a coordinated response from local, state and federal authorities. This response begins with patrol officers such as Officer Savoie who are the first responders and take the time to locate and remove firearms. Then agencies at the federal level such as the Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force join in to make it a truly coordinated response.”

The awards ceremony highlighted the cooperation between federal and local agencies in combatting domestic violence in Montgomery, specifically the efforts of the Alabama ICE

program and the TARGET Program to prosecute domestic violence offenders who illegally possess firearms and the USMS Gulf Coast Regional Task Force's efforts to apprehend DV fugitives. Alabama ICE is a partnership of federal, state, and local agencies working together to enforce federal firearms laws and reduce violent crime. Federal law prohibits offenders who have been convicted of a felony, or of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, or who are subject to a protection order, from possessing any firearm or ammunition. The goal of the partnership between Alabama ICE and the TARGET program is to identify and prosecute domestic violence offenders who commit federal firearms violations. Offenders who possess firearms or ammunition in violation of federal law face up to 10 years in federal prison, more if the individual has a criminal history that qualifies him/her as an armed career criminal. Since there is no parole in the federal system, convicted offenders serve virtually every day of the sentence imposed.

Alabama ICE domestic violence cases are investigated through cooperation between the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives ("ATF") and the Montgomery Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit. The Domestic Violence Unit identifies potential cases which are then referred to ATF for investigation and federal prosecution. The USMS Gulf Coast Regional Fugitive Task Force assists ATF and the Montgomery Police Department in apprehending fugitive domestic violence offenders. Prosecution of the offenders in federal court also requires the cooperation of the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office, yet another critical player in the federal and local partnership formed to address domestic violence in Montgomery.