



**OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY
ANSONIA-MILFORD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
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**Report on the Murder of Shengyl Rasim
on January 17, 2010**

May 24, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

The Ansonia-Milford Judicial District State's Attorney's Office is charged pursuant to Article 23 of the Connecticut State Constitution and Connecticut General Statutes § 51-275 et seq. with the investigation and prosecution of all criminal offenses occurring in this judicial district. Pursuant to this authority, State's Attorney Kevin D. Lawlor conducted an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the murder of Shengyl Rasim and the suicide of her estranged husband Selami Ozdemir which occurred in West Haven on January 17, 2010.

State's Attorney Lawlor wishes to thank the following agencies for their cooperation in this investigation: The West Haven Police Department; The West Haven Fire Department; State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch, Family Services Unit; State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch, Office of Victim Services; State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families; The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Connecticut Insurance Department and the Connecticut Office of the Victim Advocate. I would also like to thank the employees of the Milford Superior Court and members of the Ansonia-Milford State's Attorney's Office, in particular, Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney Kevin Russo and Inspectors Peter Fearon and Robert Brooks for their tireless assistance.

The purpose of this report is twofold: First, to determine the exact chain of events that occurred over the several months leading up to and including the horrific events of January 17, 2010. Second, to make recommendations based on the factual findings which may help prevent a future domestic violence tragedy.

FACTUAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS PRECEDING JANUARY 17, 2010

The first documented domestic violence case involving Selami Ozdemir and his wife Shengyl Rasim occurred on September 4, 2009. According to the West Haven Police Department (W.H.P.D.) reports, officers were dispatched at 9:17 a.m. to 346 Blohm Street pursuant to a domestic violence complaint reported by a third party. The officers determined the victim of the domestic complaint was Shengyl Rasim, then 25 years old. Ms. Rasim had fled the home prior to police arrival and was found nearby. She verbally reported to police she had been beaten and kicked by her husband, 41 year old Selami Ozdemir. She told officers he had pushed her against her daughter's crib at one point during the fight. She further described her husband's threats to kill her should she call the police. At one point she stated to officers "I do not want to go out there, he is going to kill me, he told me he would have me killed or hurt, he said he knows people and can get it done." The officers determined they were married for 7 years and were the parents of two children ages 6 and two months. Officers observed Ms. Rasim had injuries consistent with an assault including a bloody mouth and a swollen welt on her left cheek. She further complained of a headache and a stiff neck. Officers took photos of Ms. Rasim's injuries, requested she go to Yale-New Haven Hospital for a medical evaluation and had her sign a consent to release medical records form.

Officers then arrested Mr. Ozdemir and charged him with Assault in the Second Degree, Risk of Injury to a Minor and Threatening Second Degree. They then filed a temporary protection order pursuant to C.G.S. § 54-63c(b) for Ms. Rasim. This is an order put in place by a police department which requires the arrestee to avoid contact with the victim and restrict his travel. It serves as a temporary order until he is presented in Superior Court. The police also contacted a Victim Services Advocate in the Office of Victim Services on behalf of the victim. Police set Mr. Ozdemir's bond at \$50,000 and set his court appearance date for the next day court was in session: September 8, 2009. Mr. Ozdemir posted his bond and left the police station.

The West Haven Police Department continued its investigation of the case. Later that day, at 2:30 p.m., members of the W.H.P.D., pursuant to an executed Consent to Search Release and Waiver Form, seized the two handguns owned by Ozdemir. It should be noted that Ozdemir consented to the seizure of the weapons after speaking with an attorney.

Finally, on September 4th, the investigating officer, through an interpreter, attempted to procure a sworn statement from Ms. Rasim with regard to the events of September 4th. Rasim refused to provide the officer with a sworn statement. The State's Attorney's Office encourages obtaining written statements from victims because verbal statements given at the scene are inadmissible at trial should the victim subsequently refuse to testify.

Ozdemir posted bond, and was arraigned on September 8, 2009, by Judge John Ronan. By statute, the Family Relations Office screened the case for possible pretrial referral and Ozdemir's matter was, indeed, accepted by family relations due to Ozdemir's lack of either domestic arrests or convictions.

The prosecutor handling the case also made the legal determination that a crime had occurred but that there was a question as to whether some of the offenses as charged could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Prosecutors made an initial determination that the Risk of Injury charge was not factually supported by the evidence. According to procedure, the charge would be dropped if the Family Relations Office referred the defendant for further prosecution. Further investigation would be required in order to prove the charge of Assault Second Degree. The most likely charges that could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt would be Assault Third Degree and Threatening Second Degree. Also at the arraignment, a Family Relations Officer requested a full no contact protective order after speaking with the court domestic violence victim advocate. The victim advocate had spoken via telephone with the CCADV advocate at the shelter where Ms. Rasim was residing with her children. Ms. Rasim did not attend Ozdemir's arraignment. Ms. Rasim elected to take temporary residence at the domestic violence shelter. At the conclusion of Ozdemir's arraignment, he was given a court date of October 21, 2009 with the following special conditions of release: cooperate with Family Relations, Comply with Full No Contact Protective Order and Cooperate with DCF. DCF was not contacted by any agency to make them aware of this referral.

On October 8, 2009, a family relations officer telephonically consulted with the CCADV advocate. The CCADV shelter interviewed the victim with the assistance of an interpreter provided via telephone thru LanguageLine. The advocate relayed the victim's safety concerns to F.R.O. Notes from that F.R.O. interview reveal that (1) Rasim was no longer in fear of Ozdemir; (2) Rasim requested that the full no contact protective order be modified; (3) Rasim's preference regarding prosecution was treatment rather than punishment or incarceration; (4) Rasim would not object and actually encouraged Ozdemir's placement into the family violence education program.

On October 21, 2009, Attorney David Avigdor filed an appearance on behalf of Ozdemir. Pursuant to Milford State's Attorney's Office policy, a complete copy of the prosecution file was provided to counsel. After counsel had the opportunity to review the file, he filed an application for the Family Violence Education Program (FVEP) pursuant to General Statute's section 46b-38c(g), on behalf of Ozdemir, before Judge Karen Sequino. Because application to that program is bifurcated, Ozdemir's matter was continued until November 5, 2009, to determine whether he was eligible. Based upon the interview of October 8th, victim input by statute had already been addressed.

Also on October 21st, and solely at the victim's behest, the full, no contact protective order issued at Ozdemir's arraignment was modified by Judge Sequino- a point which requires further elaboration. Ms. Rasim elected to take temporary residence in a shelter rather than to remain in the home. Therefore, the full, no contact protective order did not require Ozdemir to immediately leave the 346 Blohm Street residence. Since Rasim "removed herself" from danger, Ozdemir was permitted to remain in the home. All other prohibitions included within the order remained in full force and effect. Then, at Rasim's request and based upon the contents of her October 8th interview, the full, no contact protective order was modified to a partial protective order. The new order allowed for Ozdemir to remain in the family home with Ms. Rasim and the children but prohibited him from threatening, harassing or engaging in violent behavior with Ms. Rasim.

On November 5, 2009, Attorney Avigdor and Ozdemir appeared in Milford Superior Court. Judge John Ronan placed Ozdemir into the family violence education program because the screening found that Ozdemir met each and every element for eligibility: (1) he had not been previously convicted of a family violence crime; (2) he had not had a previous case assigned to the family violence education program; and (3) he had not previously invoked or accepted accelerated rehabilitation for a family violence crime. Also, the victim did not object. Because Ozdemir was originally charged with a potentially provable class D felony, a fourth criteria – a finding of good cause - was required as a condition precedent before granting the program to Ozdemir. The F.V.E.P. application requires in felony cases that an explanation be physically attached to the application, explaining why good cause exists. Attorney Avigdor filed the appropriate written explanation on October 21, 2009. Then, pursuant to the standard operating procedure for every family violence candidate, Ozdemir's case was given a new docketing date of May 5, 2010, where it would then be determined if Ozdemir successfully completed the program. There were no further calls for assistance to W.H.P.D. from 341 Blohm Street until January 16, 2010.

FACTUAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS ON JANUARY 16-17, 2010

On January 16, 2010 at 5:26 p.m., West Haven Police Officers Gado, Healey and Stratton responded to a 911 phone call from the residence at 341 Blohm Street. The call came from a young child indicating that "Daddy hit Mommy." The caller then hung up the phone. 911 Dispatch relayed this information to the responding officers. Once at the residence, Police located Shengyl Rasim, her infant daughter and her six year old son. Her son indicated to the Police that he called 911 and that his father had hit his mother.

Ms. Rasim provided a verbal statement to Police. She said in summary that her husband had struck her in the left arm and spat upon her while she breast fed her daughter. Police observed a small scratch and red mark on her forearm. They were not prominent enough to appear in a photo. The Officers then interviewed Mr. Ozdemir. He denied striking Ms. Rasim and was arrested without incident. According to the Family Relations Office, Ozdemir was set to begin the Family Violence Education Program on February 11, 2010, three months after being placed in the program.

Ozdemir was transported to West Haven Police Department and booked. An N.C.I.C. check revealed an active protective order against him. His wife was the protectee on this order and he was therefore charged with Assault 3rd Degree, Disorderly Conduct, Violation of a Protective Order and Risk of Injury to a Minor. His bond was set at \$25,000.

Shortly thereafter, at 7:56 p.m., he posted the bond through a bondsman and was released from custody. The bondsman allegedly did not accept any monetary compensation prior to writing the bond and gaining Mr. Ozdemir's release. Furthermore, Ozdemir did not sign a contract or payment plan at the time the bond was completed. These allegations are the subject of an investigation currently underway by the State of Connecticut Insurance Department. The Connecticut Insurance Commissioner has authority to regulate surety bondsmen under Title 38a; Chapters 697, 700f, 702 and 704 of the Connecticut General Statutes. West Haven Police completed a DCF-136 notification form and added thru a modification the following stipulations to the original protective order: "Avoid all contact with alleged victim. Do not use or possess dangerous weapon."

On January 17, 2010 at approximately 3:29 a.m., Shengyl Rasim called West Haven 911 and attempted to communicate with dispatchers that her husband has returned and is banging on the door. This conversation was impaired by Ms. Rasim's inability to speak fluent English. It should be noted that the West Haven Police maintain the ability to obtain translation services via telephone should they require them to communicate with 911 callers. Those services were never utilized in this case.

At 3:36 a.m., West Haven Police Officer Stratton responded back to the Rasim residence. At 3:40 p.m., Officer Bloom arrived on scene. Ms. Rasim explained that her husband had returned to the home and was banging on the door. Officers searched the area and could not locate Mr. Ozdemir. It should be noted that Ms. Rasim had difficulty with the English language and no interpreter was present.

At 3:43 a.m., a 911 call was received in New Haven and connected with West Haven 911. The individual identified herself and stated Ozdemir was en route back to 341 Blohm Street. She expressed grave concern for the safety of Ms. Rasim and the police. The woman also stated Ozdemir was drunk. She was advised that police were at 341 Blohm Street. The dispatchers failed to obtain any other information about the location of Ozdemir. They also did not advise Officers Stratton and Bloom of this 911 call.

At 3:47 a.m., Officers Stratton and Bloom leave 341 Blohm Street.

At approximately 3:53 a.m., the 911 Dispatch Center received a call from 341 Blohm Street. On the tape the sound of an argument and a baby crying can be heard. Loud sounds which appear to be gunshots are then heard on the tape. Dispatchers mention that the sounds may have been gunshots but do not inform responding officers of this development. Officers are merely ordered to return to the home on another domestic dispute call. For the next several minutes the tape records the sounds of a baby crying and the officer's efforts to gain entry thru two locked doors.

At 3:56 a.m., Officer Stratton returned to the home. When police did gain entry thru two locked doors to the residence at 4:03 a.m., they found Ms. Rasim suffering from multiple gunshot wounds and her baby, unharmed, on the floor nearby. Mr. Ozdemir was also deceased from a self inflicted gunshot wound. A Glock 9 mm handgun was recovered from beneath Mr. Ozdemir. Officers searched the residence and found the couples 6 year old son asleep in the bedroom. They escorted him immediately out of the home.

On January 19, 2010, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner performed autopsies on the bodies of Selami Ozdemir and Shengyl Rasim. Shengyl Rasim's cause of death was ruled as multiple gunshot wounds and manner of death was ruled homicide.

Ms. Rasim's autopsy reveals she suffered four separate gunshot wounds. She received gun shot injuries to her left arm, left and right cheek, abdomen and right buttock. Ms. Rasim died from internal trauma associated with her numerous wounds.

Mr. Ozdemir's autopsy reveals he suffered one gunshot wound to the chest which exited his back. Soot on the wound was consistent with a contact range of fire through his clothing. Mr. Ozdemir's cause of death was ruled as a gunshot wound of chest and manner of death was ruled suicide. The postmortem toxicology report revealed Mr. Ozdemir's blood alcohol content to be 0.09% which was ruled acute ethanol intoxication.

SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION

West Haven Police continued to investigate the case in order to determine how and from whom Selami Ozdemir received the 9 mm handgun used in this crime. As outlined above, West Haven Police determined that Ozdemir was the registered owner of two handguns. These two handguns were seized by W.H.P.D. on September 4, 2009 after the Court issued a domestic violence protective order. This order made it illegal for Ozdemir to possess any handguns.

A subsequent trace of the Glock 9 mm handgun used in this crime led police to its registered owner, Torun Okten. This individual was subsequently arrested on February 12, 2010 and charged with Improper Transfer of a Pistol or Revolver. His case is currently pending in G.A. 22, Milford. While this individual has been arrested, he is still presumed innocent until proven guilty of the charges related to this incident.

A subsequent review of the 911 system tapes revealed another call related to this incident. As indicated in the timeline above, minutes before the final phone call from Mrs. Rasim's home, 911 operators received a call from an individual who stated that Mr. Ozdemir was on his way back to Blohm Street, he was angry and intoxicated. The caller specifically warned that he may harm his wife and police. Tragically, this information was not passed on to officers in the area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a tragic case which may have been preventable. However, assigning blame is not the purpose of this report. The goal of this investigation was to identify any areas where the criminal justice system may be improved in order to attempt to prevent another tragedy. Therefore the following areas of concern were exposed upon reviewing the entire case.

Issue #1: Gap in Treatment in Family Violence Education Program

Under existing law and protocols within the Family Relations Office (FRO), it appears that every proper step was taken in Mr. Ozdemir's pending domestic violence case. According to court records he was:

- Arraigned and screened by the Family Relations Office on the next available court date
- FRO recommended a Full No Contact Protective Order at arraignment which was granted by the Judge.
- The Defendant submitted to a follow-up interview with FRO and under existing guidelines was deemed eligible for treatment in the Family Violence Education Program (FVEP). The presiding Judge granted Mr. Ozdemir's FVEP application.
- On October 8, 2009, Victim Contact was made. The Victim initially went to a domestic violence shelter. She did not object to the program and also

requested the Protective Order be modified to allow him to have contact with her and her children. Judge Karen Sequino modified the Protective Order on his next court date, October 21, 2009, at the Victim's request.

- The defendant filed an Explanation of Good Cause for granting the FVEP because he was charged with a potentially provable D Felony. This explanation was reviewed by a Judge prior to granting the program.
- On November 5, 2009 the defendant was granted the FVEP. His case was continued until May 5, 2010 to complete the program.

Based on this case model, a gap in service to a defendant exists once the FVEP is granted. The defendant was given a seven month continuance to complete the program. The defendant was not scheduled to begin his treatment in the FVEP until February 11, 2010. A shortage of available seats in the FVEP in this region created a wait time of approximately 3 months for the program. Therefore, Mr. Ozdemir received no domestic violence counseling, services or monitoring in the two months leading up to the murder-suicide on January 16, 2010. This gap in services appears to have left defendants and victims with obvious needs for assistance without any services for a significant period of time. This puts defendants at greater risk of re-offending and victims at greater risk of being victimized again. The Judicial Branch has recognized this shortcoming. Since this incident, the Judicial Branch has increased the number of FVEP classes offered in order to decrease the backlog. Currently, a backlog of approximately 45 days remains in this district and 60 days statewide. According to the Family Relations Office, at risk defendants awaiting the FVEP can now be referred to alternative counseling prior to the commencement of the FVEP. According to the Judicial Branch, a Family Relations Counselor may employ, but are not limited to, the following options: Individual counseling with a specific focus, substance abuse/alcohol evaluation, treatment, and or testing, parenting classes, referral to alternative to incarceration programming, and the interventions available within the Adult Behavioral Health Services (substance abuse treatment, group anger management, and mental health evaluation and treatment). The utilization of these services varies by individual office.

As this case exemplifies, it is difficult to predict who is "at risk" of future violence. Therefore, a recommendation of this report would be to further increase the number of FVEP treatment groups in order to minimize the wait time for the program. Also, some form of formal reporting and supervision should continue for all defendants placed in the program for the period of time prior to the completion date. Increased supervision of clients by FRO will be addressed in Issue #3.

Issue #2: Lack of D.C.F. Notification of Initial Arrest

A review of all West Haven Police reports, FRO documentation and Ansonia-Milford State's Attorney's Office records do not reveal that the Department of Children and Families was ever notified of the initial arrest in September where Mr. Ozdemir was charged with Risk of Injury to a Minor.

Under Connecticut law, police are mandated reporters of potential child abuse. Mandated reporters are required to immediately notify D.C.F. of situations involving possible child abuse. In this case, the Defendant was charged with Risk of Injury to a Minor for allegedly beating his wife about the head and stomach and knocking her against the crib where his three month old baby was sleeping. While this did not result in a sustainable Risk of Injury charge, it reveals an abusive home environment. Since the child was not injured in any way, the case is not one of obvious child abuse but rather a risk of such abuse. This type of domestic situation is one in which the child may be endangered and therefore D.C.F. should be notified.

In this case it appears that all parties: police, F.R.O. and prosecutors assumed that one of the other agencies had made the referral. This assumption was reinforced at the defendant's initial court appearance on September 8, 2009 when the Family Relations Counselor included in his recommendations that the defendant "Cooperate with DCF". This recommendation assumed that the referral had already been made by police when in fact it had not.

Based on this set of facts, statewide protocols should be formalized among all responsible agencies for this type of circumstance. In this Judicial District, a procedure was put in place in the Family Relations Office mandating that the Family Relations Office verify that a referral has been made to D.C.F. in all cases of possible physical abuse or where the defendant has been charged with Risk of Injury to a Minor. The West Haven Police Department has clarified its protocols for notifying D.C.F. of potentially abusive situations. The Ansonia-Milford State's Attorney's Office now reviews domestic violence cases with the FRO caseworker prior to arraignment to verify if a referral has been or should be made. Early intervention in these types of situations by D.C.F. may expose future cases where the possibility of continued abuse exists. The services they could provide to families in need may also help alleviate some of the concerns expressed above regarding the gap in service outlined in Issue # 1.

Issue #3: Increased Supervision of FRO Clients by Counselors.

While FRO Counselors are not given the responsibility of supervising those accused of domestic violence while their case is pending, there appears to be a need for increased supervision of domestic violence defendants. Regretfully, they lack the resources or supervisory powers to do so.

In the Ansonia-Milford Judicial District, FRO Counselors are assigned over 100 domestic violence clients each. FRO Counselors also are required to maintain a caseload of Family Court matters as well. Counselors in this district anecdotally estimate that as much as 30% of their time is spent on family cases involving reports to court on matters such as child custody, child visitation, child support and restraining orders. This percentage split appears to be the statewide average per the Judicial Branch.

These added duties, on top of a substantial domestic violence caseload, reduce the ability of individual counselors to do more than administratively monitor defendants. They

require defendants to periodically report by telephone or to the office. FRO is dependent on progress reports from the agencies defendants are referred to. More involvement by caseworkers at this stage likely would increase the level of participation by defendants and decrease recidivism as well. As common sense and experience in criminal justice tell us, those that know they are being watched closely are more likely to actively engage in treatment and less likely to re-offend. Increased participation by defendants at this stage would lead to a decrease in the numbers of individuals who would require supervision by probation or require incarceration. This could result in a substantial long term financial savings to the state.

This level of supervision has been approached to some extent by the 16 FRO counselors assigned to domestic violence dockets in the 12 Courts statewide that have them. Those counselors do not have Family Court responsibilities. In lieu of Domestic Violence Courts in every Judicial District which may be cost prohibitive, it is a recommendation of this report that additional FRO Counselors be assigned to solely deal with criminal cases. These workers should also be given the tools and training to effectively prioritize domestic violence cases for different degrees of monitoring and more closely monitor those defendants they supervise.

Issue #4: The Bail Bondsman's Ability to Bond Out Mr. Ozdemir Without Obtaining Any Monetary Compensation.

A troubling factual allegation in this matter involves the ability of Mr. Ozdemir's bail bondsman to obtain his release without any payment whatsoever. Normally, a professional bondsman obtains a premium of between 7% and 10% of the bond posted in exchange for a suspect's release. Under the United States Constitution, bail must be reasonable and is designed to assure a defendant's future appearance in court. Police and the courts are required by statute to take a number of factors into consideration when determining the amount of bond to be set in any particular case including reasonably assuring the safety of other persons involved in the case, see C.G.S. §54-64a(2). Currently, Connecticut state law, C.G.S. §29-151 does not prevent a professional bondsman from posting a bond for an arrestee and not taking any fee. This statute merely provides a maximum allowable percentage fee but not a minimum required fee. Theoretically, an arrestee could obtain his release on a one million dollar bond without providing any money to anyone if a bondsman is willing to post the bond for free. This is currently a business decision made by a private party who has no responsibility to weigh the significant public safety risks associated with his decision. The bondsman is also not currently required to immediately fill out any paperwork outlining the contractual relationship between the parties.

In this case, police set a \$25,000.00 bond based on the seriousness of the charges, the repeated activity against the victim, the defendant's current criminal record and other factors. Under normal circumstances, the defendant would have had to raise \$2500.00 to pay the bondsman prior to his release or provide \$25,000 cash himself to the police. His ability to immediately be released prevented any cooling off period and allowed him to immediately leave the police department and obtain the handgun used in this homicide.

The Insurance Department in consultation with the Division of Criminal Justice introduced legislation this past legislative session specific to bail bond industry reform. This proposed legislation failed on the last day of the General Assembly session.

Specifically, the proposal would have done the following:

1. Prohibit an agent from executing a bail bond unless they charge the premium rate the insurer filed with the insurance department;
2. Require a bail bond agent to certify under oath that the premium charged did not differ from that which is filed and approved by the insurance department;
3. Allow a bail bond agent to enter into premium financing arrangements to allow payment plans for defendants with a minimum down payment of 35%, with payment in full due within 15 months;
4. Require surety companies to conduct audits of bail bond agents to ensure that they receive full payment when posting bail bonds; and,
5. Require surety companies to certify the integrity of the bail bond agents and to assume full responsibility for the acts and conduct of their appointed agents.

The bill also established standards for solicitation, reporting requirements and accounting for premiums along with establishing uniform standards of record retention to ensure that the Insurance Department has access to tangible records when conducting market conduct exams of bail bond agents.

In addition, the bill included a funding mechanism by assessing bail bond agents an annual fee of \$450.00 that would enable the department to have adequate resources to conduct market conduct examinations of the bail bond industry.

These common sense reforms would help prevent arrestees in domestic violence cases from literally getting a “Get out of jail free” card and almost instantly re-offending against unsuspecting victims.

Issue #5: West Haven Police Department 911 Response

The most obvious area for improvement in the handling of this case from September 4, 2009 until January 17, 2010 appears to be the response of the 911 emergency operators to several of the calls made on January 16 and January 17, 2010.

A review of the 911 tapes reveals 911 operators did not communicate vital facts to patrol officers. Responding officers needed this information in order to protect themselves and the victim, Shengyl Rasim. Most relevant to this report are three phone calls:

1. 3:29 a.m.: A phone call from Victim is made to 911 where language barrier impedes communication. During the one minute, forty nine second phone call, she attempts to explain that she hears her husband banging on the front door.

2. 3:43 a.m.: A phone call from a concerned citizen stating Ozdemir is drunk, returning to the home and is potentially violent. This information was not shared by operators with officers in area. Operators were acting under the incorrect assumption that officers were responding to the earlier call. It was later learned an officer was still in front of the house but was clearing the scene and left three minutes later.
3. 3:53 a.m.: A phone call from the residence is made to 911. The recording indicates possible gunshots. This information is not relayed to officers arriving on scene.

The issues involving the handling of the 911 calls were the immediate subject of an internal investigation by the West Haven Police and Fire Departments because they share supervision of 911 system. This internal inquiry is still being conducted. The West Haven Police Department has modified and clarified its internal procedures on relaying information to responding patrol officers.

This report will refrain from any recommendations in this area due to the ongoing internal investigation by West Haven Police and Fire Departments. It is the intention of the City of West Haven to announce these changes once that investigation is concluded. It should be emphasized however that eliciting and relaying all vital information by 911 operators is vital to protect police and victims alike.

CONCLUSION

This inquiry is not about assigning blame to any individual or agency. If this case shows anything, it shows that any domestic violence case has the potential to become a fatal situation. The Police properly evaluated the initial situation, arrested Ozdemir and placed him under a high bond. W.H.P.D. referred the victim to domestic violence services and notified the Victim Advocate. The system immediately evaluated the defendant under existing guidelines, placed a protective order upon him, contacted the victim, provided her with shelter and counseling and required the defendant to get treatment. The Police immediately arrested him when the abuse recurred, placed him on another high bond and ordered him not to return to the home prior to his appearance in court.

The changes in the system outlined above may or may not have prevented the tragic loss of Shengyl Rasim's life on January 17, 2010, we will never know. What can be said with certainty is that these gaps in service to victims and defendants alike do exist. The resources to fix them exist as well. There needs to be a political and bureaucratic willingness to place resources in the agencies working these cases and where necessary, change our procedures. If structural changes are made in the system, then Shengyl Rasim and countless others like her will not have died in vain.