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Thomas P. Hogan  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Arrests Made in Domestic Violence Assaults**

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced arrests in two separate domestic violence assaults. Lirim Rufati was arrested by the West Goshen Police Department. Ernest Manerchia was arrested by the Pennsylvania State Police. Each defendant is accused of assaulting his wife.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "A marriage license is not permission to abuse your wife. Regardless of where you are from or what you do for a living, the criminal laws against domestic violence apply to you. Nobody is above the law."

The allegations of the criminal complaints are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

A. Commonwealth v. Lirim Rufati

Lirim Rufati resides at 500 Rosedale Avenue in West Chester. He is 24 years old and a student at West Chester University.

Rufati married his wife ("Victim 1") in 2011 through an arranged marriage in Macedonia. Victim 1 is a Macedonian citizen. Rufati is an American citizen. Rufati and Victim 1 then moved to West Chester.

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<sup>1</sup> A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

Shortly after the marriage, Rufati began to physically and sexually assault Victim 1 on a regular basis. He repeatedly struck her and forcibly raped her.

A neighbor eventually reported the abuse to the police. West Goshen Police Department officers transported Victim 1 to a safe location, but Rufati tracked her down. Rufati then drove her to JFK airport in New York, where he was attempting for force Victim 1 to fly back to Macedonia against her will. A police officer in New York intervened at the check-in area and provided a refuge for Victim 1.

West Goshen police then arrested Rufati. Rufati has been charged with rape, aggravated assault, kidnapping, and related charges. Bail was set at \$250,000 cash and the defendant was remanded to Chester County Prison.

West Goshen Police Chief Joseph Gleason stated, “This case demonstrated tremendous communication and cooperation between the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County, police in New York, and the West Goshen Police Department. We also want to recognize the courage of the victim in coming forward and the neighbor who intervened to help.”

#### B. Commonwealth v. Ernest Manerchia

Ernest Manerchia resides in West Chester. Manerchia is a police officer for the City of Chester, Delaware County. Manerchia is a member of the SWAT team.

The victim is Manerchia’s wife (“Victim 2”). Manerchia and Victim 2 were having a verbal argument. Manerchia slapped Victim 2 in the face, grabbed her hair, and then began to strangle her. The victim managed to free herself and hid in the bathroom.

The Pennsylvania State Police arrested Manerchia and charged him with aggravated assault, simple assault, and related charges. Bail was initially set at \$7,500, including the condition that Manerchia stay away from the residence and surrender all firearms. Manerchia posted bail and surrendered 45 firearms to PSP. However, PSP subsequently discovered that Manerchia had covertly maintained possession of multiple firearms and had returned to the residence to confront Victim 2. Bail was revoked and re-set at \$350,000 cash, and Manerchia was remanded to Chester County Prison.

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District Attorney Hogan added, "These arrests were excellent work under difficult circumstances by the West Goshen Police Department and the Pennsylvania State Police. Domestic violence cases can accelerate from arguments to homicides in the blink of an eye."

Assistant District Attorney Michelle Frei has been assigned to prosecute these cases.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan