

New Bedford Firefighters battle structure fires, multiple emergencies in a 4-hour window

"Thursday night, crews were busy battling two structure fires in between many other emergency incidents.

At 1930 hours 911 calls were received for a house fire at 471 Sawyer St. Engine 7 arrived and reported smoke showing from a single family, one story home. They stretched a hose line into the residence and located the fire in the kitchen.

While they proceeded to extinguish the fire Engine 8 stretched a back up line and Ladder 4 conducted search operations. Engine 1, Ladder 1, Command Units 1 and 2, NBPD and NBEMS were also on scene assisting in the operations. The occupants were not home at the time of the incident but arrived moments before the fire department and attempted to extinguish the fire with the help of two neighbors. Two individuals were transported to St. Luke's hospital by NB EMS, for smoke inhalation and one dog perished in the fire. The home was protected by working smoke alarms.

Later at 2305 hours U1,U2,Engines 6, 7, 8 and Ladder 3 responded to reports of a fire at the Family Dollar, 689 Kempton St. The crew of Engine 7 forced entry into the structure and encountered a heavy smoke condition. A line was advanced inside the structure and the fire was quickly located and extinguished. The buildings working fire alarm system alerted neighbors and prompted calls to the FD. NBPD, NB EMS and NB Health Department assisted with the incident. Both fires are under investigation with New Bedford Fire Investigators."-New Bedford Fire Department.

New York man convicted in Boston for forced labor, sex trafficking 15-year old minor

“BOSTON – A New York man was convicted yesterday by a federal jury in Boston of sex trafficking a minor and forcing her to work at a strip club for his financial benefit.

Sherriff Cooper, 37, was convicted of sex trafficking of a minor by force, fraud and coercion; transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity; and forced labor. U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton scheduled sentencing for June 5, 2024. Cooper was indicted by a federal grand jury in June 2021.

“Justice was served here. Mr. Cooper abused his position of trust to violently exploit an innocent 15-year-old girl for his own financial benefit. The repeated violence and trauma he inflicted on the victim would be unimaginable if it wasn’t all so shockingly real. No verdict can erase the pain he caused, but we hope the young victim in this case and entire survivor community know that this Office will do everything in its power to hold dangerous predators accountable, and that this particular defendant will be off the streets for many years,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “This conviction does not happen without a tremendous, sustained effort by federal, state and local law enforcement partners who dedicate their professional lives to protect our children and ensure that exploitative traffickers like Mr. Cooper are held accountable.”

“The criminal acts that Sherriff Cooper were convicted of are

stomach-churning,” said Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division. “Using physical threats to control another human being, to force them into sexual servitude, is unconscionable. It was imperative that FBI Boston’s Child Exploitation – Human Trafficking Task Force take him off the street. Unequivocally, our community is safer with Mr. Cooper behind bars, locked away where he can’t victimize anyone else’s child.”

In 2017, Cooper was working as a security guard at a residential program for pregnant teens when he met the victim, who was then 15 years old. He began a sexual relationship with her and, in early 2018, Cooper began sex trafficking the victim around Boston, posting advertisements for her on commercial sex websites and taking all the proceeds. He used violence, threats of violence and coercion to make the victim engage in commercial sex for his financial benefit.

Cooper transported the victim across state lines to sex traffic her in New York. While in New York, Cooper obtained a fake ID for the minor victim and forced her to strip at a club – again, keeping all the proceeds for himself. Cooper continued to use threats of violence, violence and coercion to keep the victim working at the club for his financial benefit.

If you or someone you know may be impacted or experiencing commercial sex trafficking, please contact USAMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

The charge of sex trafficking of a minor by force, fraud and coercion provides for a sentence of a least 15 years and up to life in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of transportation of a minor with the intent to engage in criminal sexual activity provides for a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and up to life in prison, up to five years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of forced labor provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years

of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy and SAC Cohen made the announcement. Special assistance was provided by the FBI New York Field Division and the Malden Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Torey B. Cummings, Stephen W. Hassink and Lauren A. Graber of the Criminal Division are prosecuting the case.”- Massachusetts Department of Justice.

Hyannis woman sentenced in Boston for helping distribute Fentanyl in Southeastern Massachusetts, Rhode Island.

“A Hyannis woman was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston for her involvement in a drug trafficking organization (DTO) that distributed fentanyl throughout Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Rebecca Bartholomew, 37, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Allison D. Burroughs to three years in prison and three years of supervised release. In October 2023, Bartholomew pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute fentanyl. Bartholomew was one of 10 individuals indicted by a federal grand jury in August 2022 in connection with the conspiracy.

In March 2021, an investigation began into a DTO operating in

Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island led by Estarlin Ortiz-Alcantara. The investigation identified Bartholomew as a distributor for the DTO. Between April and June 2022, Bartholomew redistributed fentanyl she had obtained from Ortiz-Alcantara and allegedly other DTO members. During a traffic stop in April 2022, Bartholomew was found in possession of approximately 90 grams of fentanyl.

Bartholomew is the fourth defendant to be sentenced in case. Ortiz-Alcantara pleaded guilty in December 2023 and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 9, 2024.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New England Field Division; New Bedford Police Chief Paul Oliveira; and Fairhaven Police Chief Michael J. Myers made the announcement. Special assistance was provided by the Massachusetts State Police; Homeland Security Investigations; Bristol County Sheriff's Office; and Fall River, Taunton, Attleboro, Scituate, Yarmouth, Providence (R.I.) and West Warwick (R.I.) Police Departments. Assistant U.S. Attorney John T. Mulcahy of the Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit is prosecuting the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in the court of law."-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

New Bedford Police Department kick off Women's History Month with photo of female pioneers

"In honor of #WomensHistoryMonth, we thought we'd show off an early 2000s #throwback photo acknowledging some of the courageous women of the NBPD.

Happy #WHM, we celebrate the contributions and the sacrifices women have made not only in U.S. history, but every single day. Thank you to our officers, dispatchers, and civilian staff who have made the NBPD what it is today.

In no particular order: Former Officers Kelly Almeida, AnneMarie Lefever, Barbara Lipsett, Carol O'Shea, and Marge Clayton – May 29, 2000."-City of New Bedford Police Department.



City of New Bedford Police Department photo.

Vermont State Police charge 29-year old New Bedford man with crack cocaine trafficking

"On February 29th, 2024, at approximately 2100 hours, Troopers from the Vermont State Police Rutland Barracks, members of the Vermont Drug Task Force, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Rutland Town Police Department conducted a motor vehicle stop in the Town of Rutland.

The operator of the vehicle was identified as Calvin Holding (29) of New Bedford Ma. Holding was detained as a result of information gained during the traffic stop.

A K-9 was deployed and alerted to the presence of an odor of narcotics. A search warrant was applied for and granted. During the search of the vehicle 81.4 grams of a cocaine-based substance was found.

Holding was lodged at the Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility on 15,000.00 bail.”-Vermont State Police.

Massachusetts woman charged with traffic, narcotics offenses, after aggressive, erratic driving

“Shortly before 9 p.m. on February 27, Trooper Victoria Thompson, assigned to State Police-Norwell, was dispatched to 911 reports of a white Mercedes sedan being operated erratically, speeding and tailgating other vehicles, on Route 3 northbound in Pembroke. Trooper Thompson set her cruiser in the area of Exit 32 and eventually observed the vehicle pass her location at a high rate of speed. Trooper Thompson entered traffic and stopped the Mercedes just prior to Exit 35 in Rockland.

Upon the vehicle coming to a full stop, Trooper Thompson approached it and identified the operator as TAJANAY VEIGA, 28, of Stoughton. While speaking to VEIGA, Trooper Thompson observed her to appear agitated and continuously reach to the

floor in front of her. For officer safety reasons, VEIGA was removed from the vehicle, however, became non-compliant causing Trooper Thompson to place her in handcuffs and secure her in the rear of a cruiser. A search of the immediate area where VEIGA was seated revealed a bag containing multiple baggies of a substance suspected to be Heroin.

At this point VEIGA was placed under arrest and a tow truck was dispatched to relocate the Mercedes to the Norwell Barracks, where a full search was conducted. During this search Troopers located a loaded Smith & Wesson 9mm pistol, along with multiple baggies containing substances suspected to be Fentanyl, Heroin, Cocaine, Crack Cocaine, Marijuana, and various prescription pills. Troopers also located scales commonly used in the illegal packaging and distribution of narcotics.

VEIGA was transported to the Norwell Barracks for booking. A bail commissioner was contacted and set bail at \$2,540 before scheduling VEIGA for arraignment at Hingham District Court for the following charges:

1. Trafficking in Fentanyl;
2. Trafficking in Cocaine;
3. Possession of a Class B Drug with intent to Distribute;
4. Possession of a Class C Drug with intent to Distribute;
5. Possession Marijuana, Greater than One Ounce;
6. Possession of a Firearm in Commission of a Felony;
7. Speeding.”-Massachusetts State Police.

Three injured, 85-year-old

Rehoboth man dies in Seekonk head-on collision

"An 85-year-old Rehoboth man died during a crash with another vehicle Thursday afternoon on County Street in Seekonk.

The deceased has been identified as John Denardo.

The preliminary investigation indicates that Mr. Denardo's Cadillac was traveling east on County Street near 985 County Street at around 4:10 pm today when it unexpectedly crossed over into the westbound lane and crashed into an oncoming Toyota Camry.

The Camry was being operated by a 43-year-old man. He, his wife and their daughter were all treated for minor injuries at an area hospital. No criminal charges have been filed.

It appears Mr. Denardo may have had a medical episode prior to the crash. The investigation into the fatal crash is ongoing."

53-year-old man who raped, sexually molested five children in New Bedford, Fairhaven sentenced

"A 53-year-old man who raped or sexually molested five children under the age of 16 in New Bedford and Fairhaven was sentenced this week to serve 15 to 20 years in state prison, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III

announced.

Andres Escribano Sanchez pleaded guilty in Fall River Superior Court to indictments charging him with two counts of rape of a child-use of force, two counts of rape of a child-aggravated by age difference, seven counts of indecent assault and battery on a person under the age of 14, three counts of attempted indecent assault and battery on a person under the age of 14, one count of indecent assault and battery on a person over the age of 14 and one count of assault with intent to rape.

During a sentencing hearing before Judge Raffi Yessayan, Assistant District Attorney Casey Smith argued that due to the egregious and continuous nature of the sexual assaults on children he was supposed to be helping to care for, the defendant should serve 25 to 30 years in prison and an additional five years of probation. The defendant, however, requested a 10 year prison term.

Judge Yessayan eventually sentenced the defendant to serve 15 to 20 years in state prison, to be followed by 10 years of probation.

There are five juvenile victims in this case, all of whom considered themselves related to the defendant in some way, by virtue of his relationship with the matriarch of the family. The defendant was the boyfriend of the grandmother to four of the victims and mother to the eldest victim, who was just 16 at the time of disclosure. They all lived together with the defendant in a three family home in New Bedford. The sexual assaults occurred between April of 2017 and April of 2020.

At the time of his arrest, the defendant was residing in Puerto Rico.

“The defendant raped and molested five young girls because he had access to them. The repeated rapes and sexual assaults of multiple young victims clearly demonstrates that the defendant

is a predator and has a demented mind . He needs to be kept off the street and away from young children for the rest of his life,” District Attorney Quinn said.

Dartmouth Police Department arrests New Bedford man after car pursuit

“DARTMOUTH, MA – On Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at approximately 4:25 p.m., Dartmouth Police Detective Matthew CORREIA observed Joshua BISHOP, 29, of Fern Street, New Bedford operating a 2021 Jeep Compass on State Road.

Having prior knowledge that BISHOP was wanted by the Massachusetts Parole Board, Detective CORREIA attempted to stop the Jeep, at which time BISHOP accelerated and fled from Detective CORREIA.

As numerous officers had already converged on the area based on Detective CORREIA’s radio transmission, BISHOP was eventually stopped in the Stop and Shop parking lot on Faunce Corner Road and placed under arrest.



Dartmouth Police Department photo.

In addition to an outstanding warrant for larceny, BISHOP was charged with speeding, reckless operation, and failure to stop for police.

Upon the completion of booking at Dartmouth Police Headquarters, custody of BISHOP was transferred to members of the Massachusetts Parole Board.

According to Dartmouth Chief of Police, Brian P. LEVESQUE, "This department's dedication to ensuring the safety of the public is not only exemplary, but also heroic at times. In addition to their numerous routine responsibilities, my officers are more frequently placing themselves in harm's way as dangerous and callous individuals, such as BISHOP, are

making their way to Dartmouth.”-Dartmouth Police Department.

Boston man sentenced for solicitation of child sexual abuse porn of kids as young as 7-years old

“A Boston man was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for sexual exploitation of children as well as distributing and possessing child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Robinson Alberto Baez-Nova, 39, of Jamaica Plain, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Indira Talwani to 22 years in prison followed by a lifetime supervised release. In August 2023, Baez-Nova pleaded guilty to one count of sexual exploitation of children, one count of distribution of child pornography and two counts of possession of child pornography.

“This Office will do everything in our power to protect children and punish those who traffic in child pornography. Mr. Baez-Nova callously preyed upon some of society’s most vulnerable people, perpetuated a cycle of harm and exploitation and inflicted irreparable damage upon innocent lives. Today’s sentence ensures that this predator will be removed from our communities for nearly two decades and should be a stark warning for anyone who exploits children,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “There is no higher priority than protecting the vulnerable, especially children, from this type of horrific conduct.”

“Robinson Alberto Baez-Nova is a manipulative sexual predator

who eagerly took advantage of children living in poverty in the Dominican Republic to sexually exploit them, apparently thinking he would just continue to fly under the radar,” Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division. “Today’s lengthy sentence proves him wrong and should send a message to anyone else sexually exploiting children: FBI Boston’s Child Exploitation – Human Trafficking Task Force will investigate, hold you accountable, and ensure your destination is federal prison.”

In November 2020, Baez-Nova was identified as the owner of a Google account that uploaded images and videos of CSAM between November 2018 and August 2020.

A subsequent search of Baez-Nova’s cellphone revealed a WhatsApp chat with a 17-year-old male living in the Dominican Republic who had access to his nine-year-old niece. Beginning in or around July 2020, Baez-Nova said that he would send money to the individual and his family in the Dominican Republic if the individual produced CSAM of the minor niece. Ultimately, the individual sent Baez-Nova five different videos of his minor niece in response to the Baez-Nova’s specific requests.

Additionally, a separate WhatsApp chat with a 14-year-old minor female residing in the Dominican Republic was also found on Baez-Nova’s cellphone. In the conversations, Baez-Nova solicited the minor female to obtain images and videos of “little kids” engaged in sexual conduct in exchange for money and sent the minor CSAM, including a video of the nine-year-old minor discussed above.

In total, over 200 images and over 400 videos of CSAM were found on Baez-Nova’s cellphone and in his Google account.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy, FBI SAC Cohen and Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox made the announcement today. Valuable

assistance was provided by the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office; Nashua Police Department; Hillsborough County (N.H.) District Attorney's Office; and Homeland Security Investigations, Boston Field Division. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mackenzie Duane and Mark Grady of the Major Crimes Unit prosecuted the case.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/psc>."-Masachusetts Department of Justice.