

NEWS RELEASE

Released by: Michael A. Delaney, Attorney General

Subject: Final report regarding the June 14, 2011, murder-suicide case in Concord, New Hampshire

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Attorney General and the Concord Police Department conducted an investigation into a shooting incident involving Matthew Balch (age 22) and Sarah Balch (age 25), which occurred in Concord, New Hampshire on Tuesday, June 14, 2011. During the incident, Matthew Balch shot and killed his wife, Sarah Balch and then turned the gun on himself and killed himself.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Attorney General's findings and conclusions with regard to the incident. The findings and conclusions contained in this report are based on information gathered during the investigation.

II. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS

On June 14, 2011, Sarah and Matthew Balch lived in a single-family home at 230 Elm Street in Concord, New Hampshire with their two young daughters, ages 5 and 2.¹ Witnesses described the Balchs' relationship as very up and down, with things becoming much more heated in the week before the incident.²

Some witnesses described how Sarah told them that Matthew was verbally and emotionally abusive to her. Sarah also said that Matthew "had gotten physical" with her in the past and had gone out in the woods before and threatened to kill himself. Some witnesses

¹ One daughter was from Sarah Balch's prior relationship and the other was Sarah and Matthew's daughter.

² One witness said that Sarah and Matthew had been fighting "for years."

described Matthew as controlling, which was corroborated up by cell phone records showing multiple calls and texts from Matthew to Sarah in the days before the incident. Other witnesses reported seeing no major issues between Sarah and Matthew besides what they called normal couple-issues.

About a week before the incident on June 14, 2011, the arguments between Sarah and Matthew escalated and became more heated. Sarah also told one witness that Matthew had told her that he would rather choke her to death than have her be with someone else. Sarah expressed that “she pretty much wanted to be done” with Matthew and wrote him a two-page letter detailing her concerns about their relationship and her unhappiness. She also told a friend on Monday, June 13, 2011, that she had told Matthew that she wanted a divorce and that she wanted it to be “civil.” Sarah offered to move out for a month to “give him space and to get treatment.”³

A review of text messages between Sarah and Matthew confirmed the up and down nature of their relationship and the escalation in the tension between them. At times the messages were loving and warm but then just three days before the incident, Matthew sent an abusive and angry text message to Sarah.

During the weekend of June 10, 2011, Matthew got called into work for the weekend. On Saturday, June 11, 2011, Matthew’s mother, Diane Balch, had Sarah and Matthew’s two girls with her for most of the day. She ended up keeping the two girls overnight because Sarah indicated that she wanted to go out with some friends that Saturday night.

On Sunday morning, June 12, 2011, Sarah went to Diane’s house to pick up her two girls. Sarah told Diane that she had met a guy and didn’t want to be with Matthew anymore. Sarah said that she didn’t love Matthew anymore, that he was too controlling, and that she couldn’t take it anymore. Diane told Sarah that she had to work through her problems with Matthew.

In later interviews, Diane told the police about the tumultuous relationship between Sarah and Matthew. Diane confirmed that both had developed “drug habits” over the past year but had “both got off the drugs.” She said that Matthew had become “very controlling and possessive” of Sarah and had been depressed lately.

Matthew returned home late on Sunday June 12, 2011. On Monday, June 13, 2011, Diane spoke to Sarah again and told her not to walk away from her family. Later on that day, Matthew showed up at Diane’s house and said that Sarah “wanted to be done with him.” Diane told Matthew to give Sarah “her space.” When Sarah was at work on Monday, Matthew sent her some roses and cleaned up the house as part of his effort to make up with her. At around 11:00

³ It’s unclear exactly what Sarah meant by her reference to “treatment.” There was some evidence that Matthew and Sarah had been abusing drugs in the past. Matthew also had been having issues with depression and anger.

p.m. that night, Matthew called Diane and asked her if she knew where Sarah was. He said that he had the kids in the truck and was out looking for Sarah. Diane told him that the kids needed to be home, so Matthew took the kids home. At around 1:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 14, 2011, Matthew called Diane again and told her that the kids were in bed and he was going out to look for Sarah.

Concord Detectives learned that Sarah was out that with some friends in Concord that night. Matthew had tried to reach her multiple times on her phone, but she would not respond to him. He apparently became frustrated when she did not take his calls or return his text messages and after calling his mother, Diane Balch, left his two young children asleep at home and went out to look for Sarah. Diane Balch was concerned that Matthew had left his children at home so she went to Matthew and Sarah's home to care for the children.

When Diane Balch arrived at Matthew and Sarah's home in the early morning hours of Tuesday, June 14, 2011, no one but the two children were home. Matthew called Diane a few minutes later and she told him that he needed to "stop this" and come home. Matthew said that he needed to find Sarah, could not live without her, and would kill himself if he couldn't have her. Diane hung up with Matthew and called Sarah. Sarah said that she was "done" with Matthew but would come home. Diane texted Matthew and told him Sarah was coming home. Sarah arrived a short time later, followed by Matthew.

Once Matthew arrived home, he and Sarah started arguing. Matthew repeatedly said that he was a "changed man" and asked her not to leave him. The two went back and forth, with Diane telling them at around 3:00 a.m. that they should go to bed and work it out. Diane left shortly afterwards and said that Sarah seemed "cold and done" and Matthew was still begging for forgiveness. About 45 minutes later, Diane got a call from Matthew. He said to her, "Mom, you better get over here or your grandchildren will wake up with two dead parents." Diane told Matthew to stop being so "melodramatic" and to go to bed.

A few hours later at about 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 14, 2011, Diane called Matthew to talk about one of the children's field trips. Nothing unusual occurred during that call. However, about 20 minutes later, Diane got a call from Sarah. Sarah was crying and said that Matthew just threw her against the sliding door. She said that he wouldn't let her take a shower and that she was outside on the phone. Diane told Sarah to call 911 and then told Sarah, "I'm on my way over, I love you." Diane couldn't understand everything Sarah was saying because Sarah was crying and her cell phone was breaking up.

Diane grabbed her granddaughter who was with her and drove to Sarah and Matthew's house. As she pulled into the driveway, she saw Sarah outside with her back to her. As she continued up the driveway, she saw Matthew coming down the driveway with a gun. Diane leaned back and told her young granddaughter to get down and then drove her truck around Sarah to block Matthew. Matthew approached the front of the truck and threw the phone down he'd been holding in his hand. As Diane opened her door to get out, Matthew yelled at her, "f___ing go home! Get out of here! I f___ing love you, get the f___ out of here!" Matthew slammed Diane's truck door closed on her leg and then walked around to the back of the truck where Sarah was standing. Diane pushed the truck door open to get out, yelled "Matthew!" and then heard a loud "Pow."

Diane got out of the truck and yelled at Matthew. As she got to the back of the truck she saw Sarah down on the ground with blood coming from her face. Diane called 911 and then grabbed her granddaughter from the truck and ran up to the house to help her two other granddaughters who were standing outside the house. The older child was yelling, "Daddy, why did you shoot mommy for? Daddy, why did you shoot mommy?"

Diane stayed on the phone with 911 and then put her three grandchildren into the bathroom because it had no windows to the outside. Matthew stormed in the front door and yelled to Diane, "I love you, bye!" He walked back outside and then Sarah and Matthew's youngest daughter ran out of the bathroom to Diane. As Diane picked her up, Matthew came back into the house and went up to his daughter and gave her a hug and a kiss and told her he loved her. Matthew then hugged and kissed his mother and told her that he loved her and was sorry. He left the house and went outside and shot himself after that. The police arrived just as Matthew shot himself.

The police assisted Diane and the children and got them to safety. Later on, interviews were conducted with Diane Balch, the children, friends, neighbors, relatives and acquaintances of Sarah and Matthew Balch.

A search was conducted at Sarah and Matthew Balchs' residence. The only items of consequence found was rifle ammunition in the home and a Remington Model 700 bolt action 7mm magnum rifle, which was found under Matthew's body at the scene.

The State's Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Thomas A. Andrew, conducted autopsies on both Sarah and Matthew Balch. He determined that Sarah Balch's cause of death was a single gunshot wound to the head. Her manner of death was homicide. Toxicology showed the

presence of Xanax and Valium in her blood.⁴ Matthew Balch died as a result of a single gunshot wound to the neck. His manner of death was suicide. Toxicology showed the presence of Xanax, Celexa, and Suboxone in his blood.⁵

III. CONCLUSION

Matthew and Sarah Balch had been in a relationship for about five years and married for a year. The relationship was tumultuous at times and had become more so in the days and weeks before June 14, 2011. Things became more heated between Matthew and Sarah over the weekend of June 10, 2011.

After an argument in the early morning hours of June 14, 2011, Matthew Balch shot and killed his wife Sarah Balch in their driveway. A short time later, Matthew Balch shot himself next to their home, killing himself in the process. As a result, no criminal charges can or will be brought in this case in connection with the deaths of Matthew and Sarah Balch.

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⁴ Xanax is used to treat anxiety and depression. Valium is a muscle relaxer.

⁵ Xanax is used to treat anxiety and depression. Celexa is used to treat depression. Suboxone is a narcotic medication used for the treatment of opioid dependence.