



OAG Home

OAG Services from A - Z

Servicios en Español

OAG Contact

News Release

OAG Home

Gurbir S. Grewal  
Attorney General



AG's Executive Leadership Team

AG's Message	Ask the AG
Contact OAG	About OAG
OAG News	OAG FAQs
OAG Library	Employment
OAG Grants	Proposed Rules
OAG History	Services A-Z

Statutes / Regulations / Rules

Agencies / Programs / Units

**Other News Pages**

- Governor's Office
- Otras Noticias en Español (OAG)
- Civil Rights (Division of)
- Consumer Affairs (Division of)
- Criminal Justice (Division of)
- Election Law Enforcement Comm.
- Gaming Enforcement (Div. of)
- Highway Traffic Safety (Division of)
- Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (Office of)
- Juvenile Justice Commission
- State Police (Division of NJ)
- Law (Division of)

**For Immediate Release:**

April 1, 2020

**Office of The Attorney General**

- Gurbir S. Grewal, *Attorney General*

**Division of Criminal Justice**

- Veronica Allende, *Director*

**For Further Information:**

**Media Inquiries-**

Peter Asetline  
609-292-4791

**Citizen Inquiries-**

609-984-5828

**AG Grewal:**

**If You Threaten a Cop with COVID-19, You Will Face the Maximum Criminal Charges**

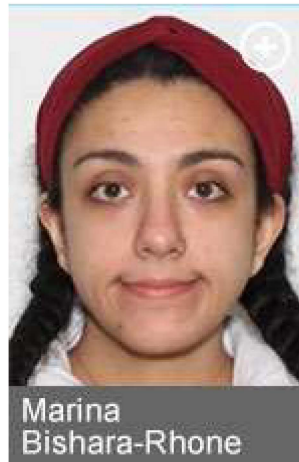
*AG's Office Brings Enhanced Criminal Charges Against Six Individuals Who Spat or Coughed at Officers and Threatened Them with COVID-19*



David Haley



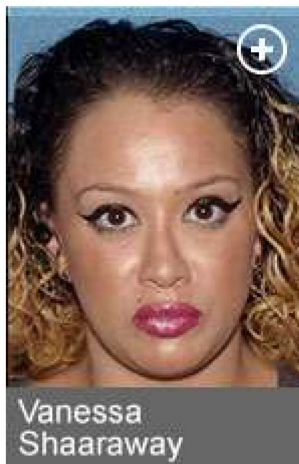
Raymond Ricciardi



Marina Bishara-Rhone



Kenneth Wideman Jr.



Vanessa Shaaraway



Jennifer Burgess

**TRENTON** – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal today announced that the Attorney General's Office has taken over prosecution of six cases and is filing upgraded charges

against defendants who allegedly threatened police officers by spitting or coughing at them and claiming to have COVID-19.

“Last week, I said the time for warnings is over and those violating the COVID-19 emergency orders will face strong law enforcement action,” said Attorney General Grewal. “Police all across New Jersey are making good on that vow by charging violators with crimes. Now, with the cases being announced today, we’re letting our dedicated officers know that we have their backs as they work tirelessly to maintain public safety and health at this difficult time.”

“We take all assaults on police officers seriously, but it is especially heinous for someone to spit or cough at an officer in an attempt to infect or threaten to infect them with COVID-19,” Attorney General Grewal added. “Hundreds of officers across New Jersey are already infected with the virus, which, in many cases, they likely contracted by protecting and serving the public while on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19. We have zero tolerance for anyone who uses the coronavirus as a weapon or instrument of terror against officers bravely performing their duties during this health crisis.”

“Troopers and officers throughout the State do not have the ability to work from home or practice social distancing while protecting and serving the residents of New Jersey in the midst of this pandemic. Law enforcement comes with many risks, none of which do the men and women who wear a badge shy away from,” said Colonel Patrick Callahan of the New Jersey State Police. “For a defendant to intentionally expose an officer to COVID-19 is not just an assault on that officer, it’s an assault on their family members, fellow officers, and the general public. Anyone who uses the virus as a weapon against an officer will face a swift law enforcement response.”

“We have superseded these criminal cases to ensure that they are prioritized and consistently prosecuted to the full extent of the law,” said Director Veronica Allende of the Division of Criminal Justice. “We have upgraded the charges in four cases by adding a second-degree charge of making terroristic threats during a state of emergency, and in all cases we have charged fourth-degree aggravated assault on an officer. All six defendants now face both of those charges.”

Second-degree crimes carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000, while third-degree crimes carry a sentence of three to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000. Fourth-degree crimes carry a sentence of up to 18 months in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The following cases, which initially were charged by local police and county prosecutors, have been superseded for prosecution by the Division of Criminal Justice:

- **David Haley, 52, of Perth Amboy**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer (4th degree), throwing bodily fluid at an officer (4th degree), and resisting arrest (disorderly persons offense). On March 21, Haley allegedly spit on Perth Amboy officers who responded to a domestic violence call. He claimed to be infected with the coronavirus. He also is charged with simple assault/domestic violence.
- **Raymond Ricciardi, 51, of New Providence**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer and EMTs (4th degree), resisting arrest (disorderly persons offense), and harassment (petty disorderly persons offense). On March 25, during a domestic violence incident, Ricciardi allegedly claimed he had the coronavirus and purposely coughed at police and medics. He also is charged with simple assault/domestic violence.
- **Marina Bishara-Rhone, 25, of River Edge**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer (4th degree), endangering (4th degree), throwing bodily fluid at an officer (4th degree), and false public alarm (2nd degree). On March 14, she was involved in a

domestic violence incident and allegedly coughed directly on a responding officer, claiming that she had the coronavirus and hoped he was now infected.

- **Kenneth Wideman Jr., 30, of Flemington**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer (4th degree), throwing bodily fluid at an officer (4th degree), possession of controlled dangerous substance (3rd degree), and related disorderly persons offenses. During his arrest on March 19, Wideman allegedly yelled in the faces of police officers and actively coughed and spit at them, claiming to have the coronavirus. He refused police commands that he wear a mask.
- **Vanessa Shaaraway, 35 of Kearny**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer (4th degree), two counts of throwing bodily fluid at an officer (3rd degree), resisting arrest (3rd degree), obstruction (4th degree), and shoplifting (4th degree). On March 27, Belleville Police responded to a report of a shoplifter and encountered the suspect, Shaaraway, who allegedly fled and refused commands to stop. When she was caught by two officers, she purposefully coughed on them and claimed that she was infected with COVID-19.
- **Jennifer Burgess, 35, of Plainfield**, is charged with terroristic threats during a state of emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on an officer (4th degree), resisting arrest (3rd degree and disorderly persons offense), throwing bodily fluid at an officer (4th degree), disorderly conduct, and DWI. During a motor vehicle stop on March 16 in Dunellen, Burgess allegedly attempted to elude police and deliberately coughed on an officer, telling the officer that she had the coronavirus.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

If you are seeing a lack of compliance with Governor Murphy's emergency orders in your town, please contact your local police department or report here [www.covid19.nj.gov/violation](http://www.covid19.nj.gov/violation)

The Attorney General's Office and New Jersey State Police will continue to work with law enforcement throughout New Jersey to deter non-complaint behavior.

# # # #



*Follow the New Jersey Attorney General's Office online at [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Flicker](#) & [YouTube](#). The social media links provided are for reference only. The New Jersey Attorney General's Office does not endorse any non-governmental websites, companies or applications.*

---

[News Index Page | top](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Legal Statement](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#) 

Departmental: [OAG Home](#) | [Contact OAG](#) | [About OAG](#) | [OAG News](#) | [OAG FAQs](#)

Statewide: [NJ Home](#) | [Services A to Z](#) | [Departments/Agencies](#) | [FAQs](#)

Copyright © State of New Jersey

This page is maintained by OAG Communications. Comments/Questions: [email](#) or call 609-292-4925