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An Austin County jury sentenced a man to the maximum prison sentence last week for Felony Stalking after a four-day trial in Bellville.

The jury sentenced Dustin Kokenes, 38, to 10 years in the Texas Department of Corrections. The jury also assessed a fine of \$8,000. The jury deliberated 33 minutes to return a guilty verdict and 45 minutes to assess punishment.

District Attorney Travis J. Koehn and First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Robinson presented evidence that Kokenes and his wife separated in 2018 due to his violent tendencies and threats. His wife moved to Austin County and they divorced in 2019.

Kokenes sent thousands of texts, emails and other correspondence to his ex-wife in which he threatened her and family members with death and assault. He also threatened law enforcement officers, his attorney, court officials and others.

Kokenes, a resident of Rockport, Texas, traveled several times to Austin County in violation of court orders and was confronted by members of his ex-wife's family. Despite being warned by deputies and the court, Kokenes continued his harassment and stalking.

On December 15, 2019, Austin County deputies arrested Kokenes after he returned to Austin County and walked towards his ex-wife's rural home.

ADA Robinson said Kokenes stalked his ex-wife continuously after being warned by the divorce court judge, DA's office, and peace officers.

"This defendant was given several chances to seek mental health treatment and to stop his behavior," Robinson stated. "He was jailed and released on Bond Conditions which he immediately violated by threatening law enforcement, attorneys and civilians, and he had to be rearrested."

District Attorney Travis J. Koehn said Sheriff's deputies stayed in contact with the victim and placed a close patrol on her residence during this ordeal.

"Despite his many threats of violence, law enforcement was able to stop Kokenes before he killed or injured anyone," Koehn added.

"We brought evidence that Kokenes had access to guns and wanted to get assault weapons as part of his future plans," Koehn said.

"The jury recognized the defendant's dangerous nature and returned a just sentence," Koehn stated. DA Koehn and ADA Robinson also thanked the jury for their attention and service.

"This is the first Felony trial held in the new Austin County Justice Center," said Robinson. "Christian City Fellowship Church allowed us to use their facility during State mandated Covid precautions, and we greatly appreciate their significant contribution to the criminal justice process in Austin County."

"We are grateful to Pastor Griffin and all the staff at Christian City for their time and the use of their facilities to ensure justice was able to continue during the past year," Koehn added.