

Woman's death in Fort Pierce highlights troubling increase in domestic violence

Boyfriend arrested after 25-year-old woman found dead in driveway



Crime scene investigators continued to collect evidence at a home where a woman was fatally shot Saturday in Fort Pierce.



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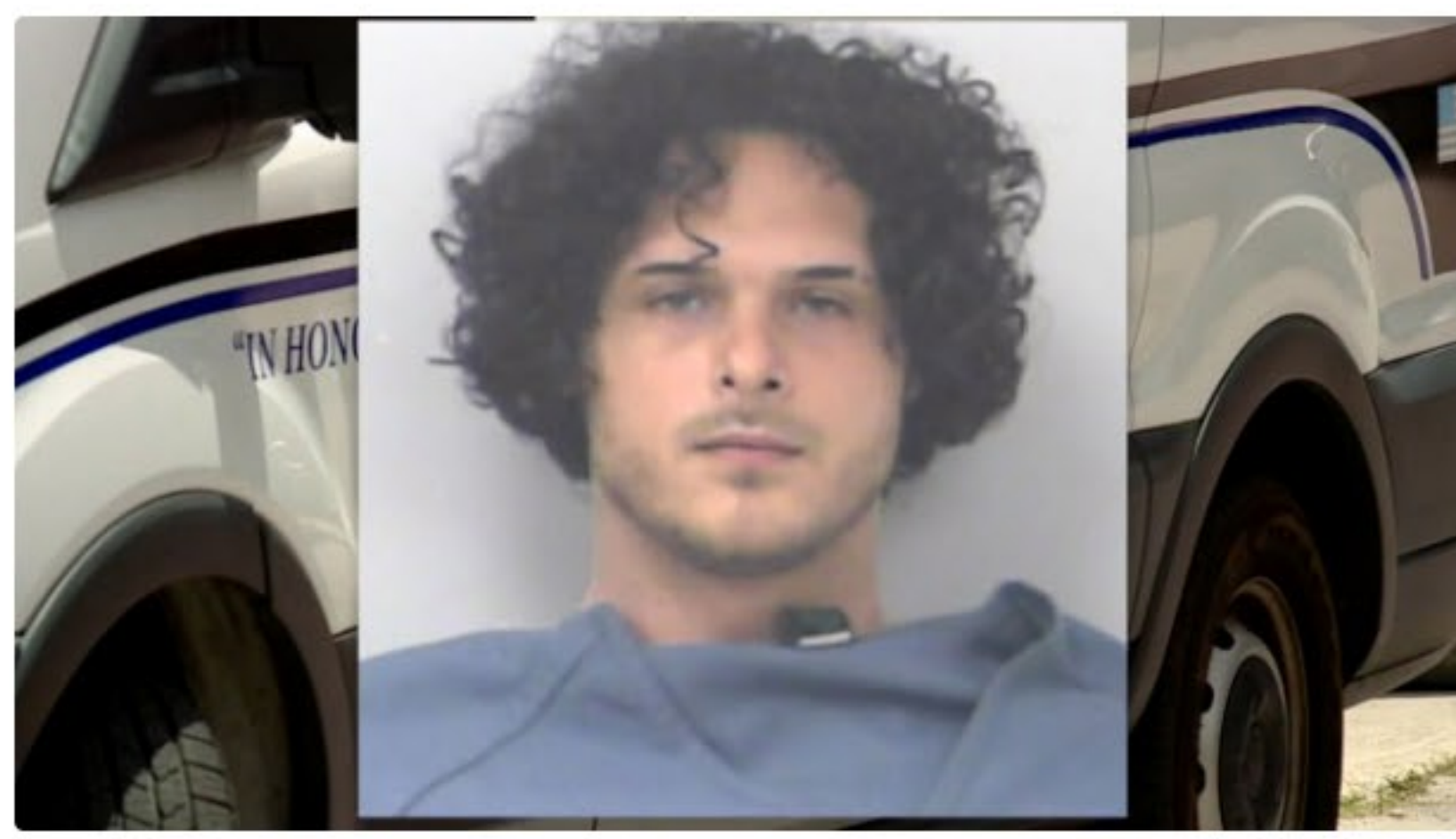
By: Kamrel Eppinger

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FORT PIERCE, Fla. — Crime scene investigators continued to collect evidence at a home where a woman was **fatally shot Saturday** in Fort Pierce.

Investigations said the victim's longtime boyfriend, Robert Castro, 26, was arrested several hours after the incident occurred on Timber Ridge Lane.

Neighbors are still struggling to comprehend the deadly incident.



St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office, WPTV Robert Castro was arrested after his girlfriend was fatally shot in Fort Pierce on July 23, 2022.

Maylen Rego said she heard two people arguing early Saturday morning and then multiple gunshots.

"They were fighting," Rego said. "He was hitting her."

Police said when they arrived at the scene they found a 25-year-old woman dead in the driveway.

"It was scary and then the dog -- she had a dog -- it didn't let the police go to her body," Rego said.



WPTV Maylen Rego speaks about what she heard the night that a woman was killed in her neighborhood.

Police said after the shooting Castro called 911 and told them he had just committed a murder. Hours later he turned himself into authorities.

"It was really sad for her baby. She left a little baby," Rego said.

The victim's 4-year-old son was inside the home at the time of the shooting but was not hurt.

Police are still working to determine a motive but said it appears the couple was going through a breakup.

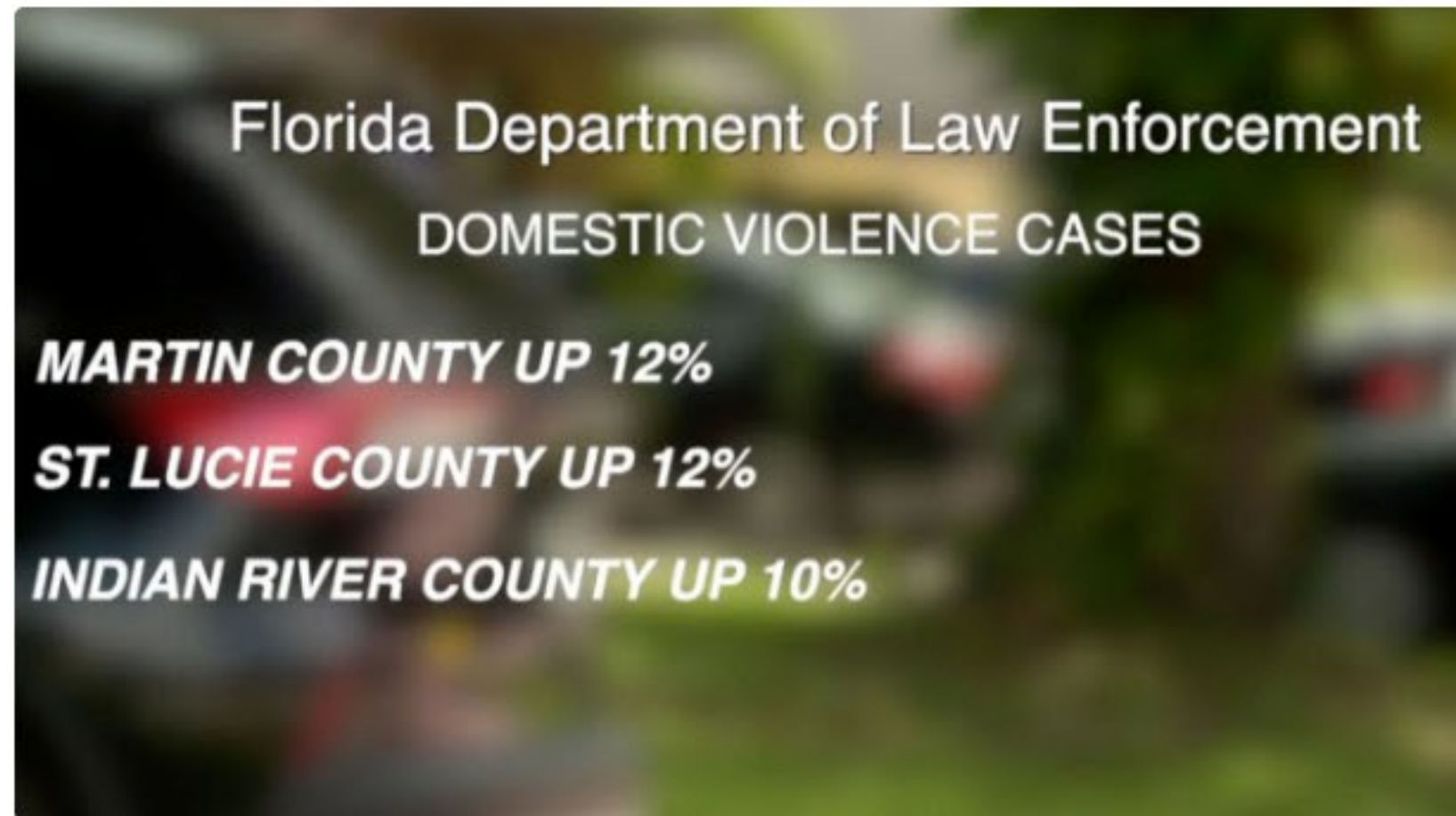


WPTV Dr. Teresa Albizu speaks about the factors contributing to the rise in domestic violence cases.

"The problem with domestic violence is that it goes highly underreported," Dr. Teresa Albizu, the CEO of SafeSpace. "Victims feel very fearful sometimes of taking action."

SafeSpace serves as a safe haven for victims of domestic violence on the Treasure Coast. Albizu said since 2019 that cases have been on the rise throughout the area.

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, domestic violence cases are up 12% in Martin and St. Lucie counties and 10% in Indian River County.



WPTV Figures provided by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement show that domestic violence cases are on the rise across the Treasure Coast.

"Joblessness, financial insecurity, increase use of alcohol, depression, social isolation — all those things impact your stress levels and heightened stress levels, which often contribute to increased hostility and aggression," Albizu said.

She said she is also seeing the increase firsthand with 250 hotline crisis calls per month, stressing the importance for victims to seek help if they are in need.

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) if you are in an abusive relationship and need help.

Castro remains in jail and is facing a first-degree murder charge. are in need.