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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

LARRY WATSON,

Petitioner,

No. 2: 09-cv-1855 FCD KJN P

vs.

JAMES D. HARTLEY,

Respondent.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

_____ /

I. Introduction

Petitioner is a former state prisoner proceeding without counsel with a petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petitioner challenges his 2007 conviction for two counts of dissuading a witness by force or threat (Cal. Penal Code § 136.1(c)(1)), two counts of assault with a firearm (Cal. Penal Code § 245(a)(2)), felony child abuse (Cal. Penal Code § 273a(a)), stalking (Cal. Penal Code § 646.9(a)), false imprisonment (Cal. Penal Code §§ 236, 237), brandishing a loaded firearm (Cal. Penal Code § 417(b)), and knowingly violating a court order (Cal. Penal Code § 273.6(a)). On appeal, petitioner’s sentence was modified to seven years and four months.

This action is proceeding on the amended petition filed November 30, 2009. (Dkt. No. 14.) The amended petition raises the following claims: 1) insufficient evidence

1 (2 claims); and 2) violation of California Penal Code § 654.

2 After carefully considering the record, the undersigned recommends that the
3 petition be denied.

4 II. Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (“AEDPA”)

5 In Williams (Terry) v. Taylor, 529 U.S. 362 (2000), the Supreme Court defined
6 the operative review standard in a habeas corpus action brought pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254.
7 Justice O’Connor’s opinion for Section II of the opinion constitutes the majority opinion of the
8 court. There is a dichotomy between “contrary to” clearly established law as enunciated by the
9 Supreme Court, and an “unreasonable application of” that law. Id. at 405. “Contrary to” clearly
10 established law applies to two situations: (1) where the state court legal conclusion is opposite
11 that of the Supreme Court on a point of law; or (2) if the state court case is materially
12 indistinguishable from a Supreme Court case, i.e., on point factually, yet the legal result is
13 opposite.

14 “Unreasonable application” of established law, on the other hand, applies to
15 mixed questions of law and fact, that is the application of law to fact where there are no factually
16 on point Supreme Court cases which mandate the result for the precise factual scenario at issue.
17 Id. at 407-08. It is this prong of the AEDPA standard of review which directs deference be paid
18 to state court decisions. While the deference is not blindly automatic, “the most important point
19 is that an *unreasonable* application of federal law is different from an incorrect application of
20 law. . . . [A] federal habeas court may not issue the writ simply because that court concludes in
21 its independent judgment that the relevant state-court decision applied clearly established federal
22 law erroneously or incorrectly. Rather, that application must also be unreasonable.” Id. at 410-
23 11 (emphasis in original). The habeas corpus petitioner bears the burden of demonstrating the
24 objectively unreasonable nature of the state court decision in light of controlling Supreme Court
25 authority. Woodford v. Viscotti, 537 U.S. 19 (2002).

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1 “Clearly established” law is law that has been “squarely addressed” by the United
2 States Supreme Court. Wright v. Van Patten, 552 U.S. 120 (2008). Thus, extrapolations of
3 settled law to unique situations will not qualify as clearly established. See e.g., Carey v.
4 Musladin, 549 U.S. 70, 76 (2006) (established law not permitting state sponsored practices to
5 inject bias into a criminal proceeding by compelling a defendant to wear prison clothing or by
6 unnecessary showing of uniformed guards does not qualify as clearly established law when
7 spectators' conduct is the alleged cause of bias injection).

8 The state courts need not have cited to federal authority, or even have indicated
9 awareness of federal authority, in arriving at their decision. Early v. Packer, 537 U.S. 3 (2002).
10 Nevertheless, the state decision cannot be rejected unless the decision itself is contrary to, or an
11 unreasonable application of, established Supreme Court authority. Id. An unreasonable error is
12 one in excess of even a reviewing court’s perception that “clear error” has occurred. Lockyer v.
13 Andrade, 538 U.S. 63, 75-76 (2003). Moreover, the established Supreme Court authority
14 reviewed must be a pronouncement on constitutional principles, or other controlling federal law,
15 as opposed to a pronouncement of statutes or rules binding only on federal courts. Early v.
16 Packer, 537 U.S. at 9.

17 However, where the state courts have not addressed the constitutional issue in
18 dispute in any reasoned opinion, the federal court will independently review the record in
19 adjudication of that issue. “Independent review of the record is not de novo review of the
20 constitutional issue, but rather, the only method by which we can determine whether a silent state
21 court decision is objectively unreasonable.” Himes v. Thompson, 336 F.3d 848, 853 (9th Cir.
22 2003).

23 When reviewing a state court’s summary denial of a claim, the court “looks
24 through” the summary disposition to the last reasoned decision. Shackleford v. Hubbard, 234
25 F.3d 1072, 1079 n.2 (9th Cir. 2000).

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1 III. Background

2 The opinion of the California Court of Appeal contains a factual summary. After
3 independently reviewing the record, the undersigned finds this summary to be accurate and
4 adopts it herein.

5 Defendant lived on a rural property in Grass Valley with his wife
6 of 19 years, J.W., and his 17-year-old daughter, A.W. The property
7 had two residences, a main house in which A.W. slept, and a
“granny” house in which defendant and J.W. resided during
renovations to the main house.

8 On August 29, 2005, defendant was depressed and under
9 considerable stress so J.W. stayed home to help him. J.W. made
10 dinner, but defendant did not like it so he told her to make dinner
11 again. J.W. complied and went to the store get more ingredients.
After his wife left for the store, defendant started to yell at his
daughter for lacking respect along with being irresponsible and
ungrateful. He eventually hit A.W. hard on the arm and grabbed
her by the jaw and neck, hurting and scaring her.

12 A.W. called a friend and used a prearranged code word to have the
13 friend call the police. The police arrived and A.W. told them about
14 the incident, but they left after examining her and finding no
bruises.

15 Defendant asked A.W. what she told the police. After finding out
16 what she had said, defendant told A.W. she should not have done
that as it could get him in a lot of trouble.

17 Defendant's 50th birthday was on August 31, 2005. That morning,
18 A.W. and J.W. presented birthday cards to defendant but he
returned them, claiming his wife's card was derogatory and his
daughter had not spent enough time on hers. Defendant then took
19 A.W. to school, but returned home with her because she said
something sarcastic to him in the parking lot.

20 A.W. and J.W. spent the day doing chores and working on the
21 cards. Defendant was angry nothing had been done for his birthday,
22 so A.W. and J.W. decided to decorate their picnic table and
barbecue some steaks. Defendant was too tired and groggy to leave
23 the granny house, so they brought the meal indoors to him.

24 Defendant yelled during dinner and drank a gin and tonic. He had a
total of five or six that night, eventually drinking straight gin.

25 Defendant became angrier after dinner, complaining first about
26 what A.W. said in the school parking lot, and then bringing up an
incident earlier in the summer in which unknown friends of hers

1 had strewn toilet paper over the outside of the house. As his anger
2 over the toilet paper incident escalated, defendant grabbed his
3 daughter by the head and shook her. After J.W. told defendant to
stop, he turned around, grabbed his wife by the shoulders, and
pinned her down on the couch, telling her to stay out of it.

4 Defendant was yelling about how dangerous it was to toilet paper
5 the house in this rural area as most people had guns. He brought
6 out a locked metal box, opened it, and took out a semiautomatic
7 handgun. Waving the gun around, defendant reiterated to A.W. the
8 dangers of trespassing in Grass Valley as so many people have
9 guns. The gun was cocked, loaded, and crossed the path of A.W.'s
10 and J.W.'s bodies as defendant continued to tell A.W. how one
11 could easily get shot in this area.

12 Testifying about defendant's use of the gun, A.W. stated "it crossed
13 in front of me, it could have shot me if it had gone off." Defendant
14 was talking with his hands as he held the gun rather than pointing it
15 directly at anybody. He was between one and one and one-half feet
16 from A.W. as defendant waved the loaded pistol.

17 Defendant opened the top part of the handgun and flipped out all of
18 the bullets, leaving them on the floor. He told his daughter the
19 bullets were hollow points which could blow her head off. He then
20 took a different pistol, a revolver, out of the metal box and placed
21 the barrel at A.W.'s temple, saying he wanted A.W. to know how it
22 feels. A.W. sat there crying as he held the gun to her head, not
23 knowing whether it was loaded.

24 J.W. exclaimed to defendant, "What are you doing? Are you
25 crazy?" He leaned over and put the gun on J.W.'s temple with
26 enough force to push her over. Like her daughter, J.W. did not
know whether the revolver was loaded at this point. Defendant
took the gun from J.W.'s head, opened it up, and spun the barrel to
show it was not loaded, saying he would not have done this had the
gun been loaded. Defendant then locked up the guns and put them
away.

After putting the guns away, defendant told A.W. and J.W. if they
told anyone he would kill them, and if jailed, he would hunt them
down and kill them once he got out. He then sent them upstairs to
go to bed, where the two sat in fear for their safety.

Defendant eventually came upstairs and said they could not leave
because the phones were disconnected and he had turned on the
alarm system. He told them if the police came they were to say
everything was fine and not say what had happened.

The next morning A.W. informed the authorities after her mother
had arrived safely at work. Defendant was arrested, read his
Miranda v. Arizona (1966) 384 U.S. 436 warnings, and

1 interviewed at jail. He told the deputy that he did not understand
2 much of what happened yesterday as he had taken four to five
3 Xanax pills and consumed six to eight gins. Defendant
4 remembered talking to his daughter about the toilet paper incident
5 and getting very angry, admonishing her that she could get shot if
6 she did something like that. The guns were taken out to scare his
7 daughter, but defendant first made sure they were empty. An
8 emergency protective order was obtained and served on defendant
9 while he was in jail.

6 The day after the incident, A.W. and J.W. went to a local motel
7 under a fictitious name. Knowing defendant had been arrested and
8 made bail they used a car cover to hide their car in the motel
9 parking lot. They went to bed, and at around 4:00 or 4:30 a.m. were
10 awakened by knocking on the door.

9 J.W. went to the door and looked in the peephole, which was
10 covered by a finger. Afraid, J.W. stood by the door for five to
11 seven minutes. The finger was removed from the peephole,
12 revealing defendant as the person knocking on the door. J.W. went
13 straight to the phone and dialed 911. After several more minutes of
14 knocking, they heard a truck drive away.

13 A deputy was dispatched to the motel and defendant was pulled
14 over after his truck was spotted leaving the motel parking lot.
15 Defendant first said he was looking for a place to stay but
16 eventually admitted wanting to talk to his wife and daughter. He
17 told the deputy he did not know what type of court order he had
18 been given, but knew he was not supposed to be around his wife or
19 daughter. A copy of the emergency protective order and a car cover
20 were found in defendant's truck.

17 J.W. and A.W. testified to physical and emotional abuse committed
18 by defendant against J.W. during their marriage. She had
19 previously obtained a restraining order against defendant and left
20 him, but defendant talked her into returning.

20 An expert testified on domestic violence. Domestic violence
21 involves an ongoing pattern of coercion and intimidation designed
22 to control the victim. The abuse is much more emotional than
23 physical, and it is common for the victim to leave the perpetrator
24 and return. None of the expert's testimony was based on the facts
25 of the case or a review of the files.

23 Defendant's mother, testifying for the defense, stated her son did
24 not seem right and was barely able to speak when she called him
25 on his birthday. According to his physician, defendant had been
26 prescribed Xanax for his anxiety. Among the side effects for the
27 drug were drowsiness, sleepiness, and loss of consciousness, as
28 well as irritability, confusion, and a lack of coordination. Mixing
29 five to six drinks with Xanax could easily lead to profound

1 drowsiness or becoming unconscious.

2 Defendant denied cutting the phone lines or saying he would hunt
3 down his wife and daughter or kill them. While he admitted to
4 talking to A.W. about the danger of vandalism at his birthday
5 dinner, defendant denied grabbing or shaking her. He claimed to
6 have had only one drink at dinner and was sober when he showed
7 the guns to A.W. He took out the guns to make an impression on
8 her, and made sure they were unloaded first. The second gun
9 defendant took out, the revolver, was never directly pointed at
10 A.W.

11 As he was showing the second gun, J.W. ran to defendant and
12 pushed him down, causing a scuffle. Defendant claimed he held the
13 gun in one hand and grabbed his wife's shoulder with the other,
14 causing the side of the gun barrel to incidentally touch her head.

15 Defendant asserted he never deliberately pointed a weapon at either
16 J.W. or A.W., and made sure to tell them they were unloaded. He
17 was only trying to tell her not to vandalize property.

18 Defendant also denied ever abusing his wife and could not recall
19 being given a protective order at jail. He was looking for a place to
20 sleep when he went to the motel.

21 (Respondent's Exhibit A, at 2-8.)

22 IV. Discussion

23 A. Alleged Insufficient Evidence: Claims 1 and 2

24 *Legal Standard*

25 When a challenge is brought alleging insufficient evidence, federal habeas corpus
26 relief is available if it is found that upon the record evidence adduced at trial, viewed in the light
most favorable to the prosecution, no rational trier of fact could have found "the essential
elements of the crime" proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307,
319 (1979). Jackson established a two-step inquiry for considering a challenge to a conviction
based on sufficiency of the evidence. U.S. v. Nevils, 598 F.3d 1158, 1164 (9th Cir. 2010). First,
the court considers the evidence at trial in the light most favorable to the prosecution. Id., citing
Jackson, 443 U.S. at 319. "[W]hen faced with a record of historical facts that supports
conflicting inferences," a reviewing court "must presume – even if it does not affirmatively

1 appear in the record – that the trier of fact resolved any such conflicts in favor of the prosecution,
2 and must defer to that resolution.” *Id.*, quoting *Jackson*, 443 U.S. at 326.

3 “Second, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution,
4 a reviewing court must determine whether this evidence so viewed is adequate to allow ‘any
5 rational trier of fact [to find] the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.’”
6 *Id.*, quoting *Jackson*, 443 U.S. at 319. “At this second step, we must reverse the verdict if the
7 evidence of innocence, or lack of evidence of guilt, is such that all rational fact finders would
8 have to conclude that the evidence of guilt fails to establish every element of the crime beyond a
9 reasonable doubt.” *Id.*

10 Superimposed on these already stringent insufficiency standards is the AEDPA
11 requirement that even if a federal court were to initially find on its own that no reasonable jury
12 should have arrived at its conclusion, the federal court must also determine that the state
13 appellate court could not have affirmed the verdict under the *Jackson* standard in the absence of
14 an unreasonable determination. *Juan H. v. Allen*, 408 F.3d 1262 (9th Cir. 2005).

15 *Claim 1*

16 Petitioner alleges that there was insufficient evidence to support his conviction for
17 felony child abuse. The California Court of Appeal denied this claim for the reasons stated
18 herein:

19 Defendant contends there is insufficient evidence to support his
20 conviction for felony child abuse. We disagree.

21 In determining whether the evidence is sufficient to support a
22 conviction, the court must review “the whole record in the light
23 most favorable to the judgment” and decide “whether it discloses
substantial evidence ... such that a reasonable trier of fact could
find the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.” (*People v.*
Johnson (1980) 26 Cal.3d 557, 578.)

24 “Under this standard, the court does not “ask itself whether it
25 believes that the evidence at the trial established guilt beyond a
reasonable doubt.” [Citation.] Instead, the relevant question is
26 whether, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to
the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the

1 essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.’
2 [Citation.]” (People v. Hatch (2000) 22 Cal.4th 260, 272, italics
3 omitted.)

4 As relevant to this case, pursuant to section 273a, subdivision (a),
5 it is a crime for “[a]ny person who, under circumstances or
6 conditions likely to produce great bodily harm or death, willfully
7 causes or permits any child to suffer, or inflicts thereon
8 unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering....” The felony child
9 endangerment statute is ““intended to protect a child from an
10 abusive situation in which the probability of serious injury is
11 great.” [Citation.]” (People v. Valdez (2002) 27 Cal.4th 778, 784
12 (Valdez.) To support his contention, defendant argues his acts
13 were not sufficiently likely to result in death or serious injury.

14 The parties differ over the meaning of the term “likely” in the
15 context of section 273a. Defendant contends the felony child
16 endangerment statute is ““intended to protect a child from an
17 abusive situation in which the probability of serious injury is
18 great.” [Citation.]” (Valdez, supra, 27 Cal.4th 778, 784; People v.
19 Sargent (1999) 19 Cal.4th 1206, 1216.) The Attorney General
20 counters by arguing these statements are dicta, and viewed in the
21 context of the purpose of the legislation, protecting vulnerable
22 children, “likely” is defined as “a substantial danger, i.e., a serious
23 and well-founded risk, of great bodily harm or death.” (People v.
24 Wilson (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 1197, 1204.)

25 There is sufficient evidence to support the jury's verdict under
26 either definition of the term. An obviously angry defendant, having
consumed alcohol and Xanax, waved a loaded, cocked,
semiautomatic pistol less than two feet from his daughter, allowing
it to cross the path of her body, which presented a profound danger
to A.W.

There are many dangerous possibilities inherent to this scene. The
gun could accidentally discharge, a particular danger as defendant
had been drinking and taking antidepressants. It is also possible
that A.W. or J.W., already frightened by defendant's behavior,
could have struggled with him for the gun causing it to discharge.
Since the weapon was at point-blank range and crossed the path of
A.W.'s body, defendant's action carried a great risk of death or
serious bodily injury to her.

We are not persuaded by defendant's contention that this ruling
violates his due process rights. Holding defendant liable for his
reckless behavior, which endangered his daughter's life, does not
render the child endangerment statute vague nor does it deprive
defendant of fair notice. Accordingly, we conclude defendant's
conviction for felony child abuse is supported by substantial
evidence.

1 (Respondent's Exhibit A, at 8-11.)

2 The undersigned agrees with the reasoning of the California Court of Appeal that
3 there was sufficient evidence to support petitioner's conviction for child abuse. His daughter,
4 Ashley, testified that petitioner waived a loaded gun around and that petitioner could have shot
5 her:

6 Q: Let me ask you the next question. Did he do anything with
7 that gun?

8 A: He cocked the gun and was waving it around, just, I mean, he
9 was using hand movements while he was talking, the gun was in
10 his hand, so it was waving around the room, and he was just saying
11 that it's dangerous to be vandalizing in this area because you could
12 get shot easily.

13 Q: Did he – you said he was waving it around, when he was
14 waving it around, did you feel that it ever kind of crossed the path
15 of your body?

16 A: Yes.

17 Q: Did it ever cross the path of your mother's body?

18 A: Yes.

19 Q: And you know what I mean by that?

20 A: It crossed in front of me, that it could have shot me if it had
21 gone off.

22 Q: Yes. Did you believe it did that?

23 A: Yes.

24 Q: And also for your mother?

25 A: Yes.

26 Q: Can you kind of describe or show us with your hands the way
he was waving it around.

A: Well, I mean, he was just talking and using his hands a lot, I
mean, just talking, you know how people use hand movements,
and I mean it was everywhere, up and down and sideways, and it
wasn't like a certain path and he wasn't pointing it directly at
anybody.

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Q: So he never kind of did a stance or anything like that?

A: No.

Q: But he was waving it around?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it making you nervous?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you say anything to him about that?

A: No. We were just, everybody was just really upset, we weren't – I mean, no, I didn't say anything.

Q: When you say everybody was upset, what do you mean by that?

A: My mom and I were both crying a lot, and my dad was yelling and he was really red in the face and just, it was really tense I guess.

Q: All right. So after he waved around the black gun, what did he do next?

A: He did something to flip the bullets out of the back and they just went onto the floor in the living room.

(RT, at 322-24.)

Ashley went on to testify how petitioner then pointed a gun to her head and then to her mother's head. (RT, at 324-25.) At that time, she did not know whether it was loaded. (RT, at 325.) It turned out to be unloaded.

The undersigned agrees with the California Court of Appeal that defendant's waiving of a loaded gun across the path of his daughter's body, while he was under the influence of alcohol and Xanax, presented a profound danger to her. A reasonable jury could have found that petitioner's conduct was sufficiently likely to result in death or serious injury.

After conducting an AEDPA review, the undersigned recommends that this claim be denied.

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1 *Claim 2*

2 Petitioner alleges that there was insufficient evidence to support his convictions
3 for assault with a firearm. The California Court of Appeal denied this claim for the reasons
4 stated herein:

5 Defendant contends his convictions for assault with a firearm are
6 not supported by substantial evidence. We are not persuaded.

7 In order to prove assault with a firearm, a general intent crime, a
8 person must have been assaulted and the assault must have been
9 committed with a firearm. One can commit the crime without
10 actually discharging the firearm. (People v. Colantuono (1994) 7
11 Cal.4th 206, 219 (Colantuono.) Holding up a fist in a menacing
12 manner or presenting a gun at someone who is within range
13 constitutes assault. (Ibid., citing People v. McMakin (1857) 8 Cal.
14 547, 548.) “[A]ny other similar act, accomplished by such
15 circumstances as denote an intention existing at the time, coupled
16 with a present ability of using actual violence against the person of
17 another, will be considered an assault.” (Colantuono, supra, at p.
18 219, italics omitted.) Nor must the prosecution prove that
19 defendant made an attempt to use the weapon upon the person of
20 another. (People v. McCoy (1944) 25 Cal.2d 177, 189.)

21 The focus of section 245 “is the likelihood that the force applied
22 or attempted to be applied will result in great bodily injury.”
23 [Citation.]” (Colantuono, supra, 7 Cal.4th at p. 217, italics
24 omitted.) Therefore, “[t]he pivotal question is whether the
25 defendant intended to commit an act likely to result in such
26 physical force, not whether he or she intended a specific harm.”
(Id. at p. 218.)

As we have already discussed, defendant's actions created an
unacceptably high risk of death or great bodily injury to A.W. by
waving a loaded, cocked pistol in front of her body at point-blank
range. The same applies to J.W., who also had the pistol waved
across her body by the angry, possibly intoxicated defendant. His
convictions are supported by substantial evidence.

(Respondent’s Exhibit A, at 11-12.)

For the reasons stated by the California Court of Appeal, the undersigned finds
that there was sufficient evidence to support petitioner’s assault convictions. The evidence
demonstrated that petitioner intended to waive a loaded gun, in close range, in front of his wife
and daughter. As discussed above, his daughter testified that he could have shot her or her

1 mother. Based on the evidence presented at trial, a reasonable jury could have found that
2 petitioner intended to use the gun in a manner which was likely to have resulted in great bodily
3 injury to his wife and daughter.

4 After conducting an AEDPA review, the undersigned recommends that this claim
5 be denied.

6 B. Claim 3: Alleged Violation of California Penal Code § 654

7 Petitioner argues that his consecutive sentence for his stalking conviction violated
8 California Penal Code § 654. The California Court of Appeal denied this claim for the reasons
9 stated herein:

10 Section 646.9 provides, in pertinent part, “(a) [a]ny person who
11 willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows or harasses another
12 person and who makes a credible threat with the intent to place that
13 person in reasonable fear for his or her safety, or the safety of his or
14 her immediate family, is guilty of the crime of stalking....”

15 Defendant contends his sentence for stalking should have been
16 stayed under section 654 because the crime, which involves
17 repeated acts, necessarily involves both the incident at the motel
18 and the acts committed by defendant which led to his conviction on
19 the other charges. He is mistaken.

20 Section 654, subdivision (a), provides in pertinent part: “An act or
21 omission that is punishable in different ways by different
22 provisions of law shall be punished under the provision that
23 provides for the longest potential term of imprisonment, but in no
24 case shall the act or omission be punished under more than one
25 provision.”

26 Defendant contends section 654 applies to his sentence, as is
“clearly illustrated” by People v. Shelton (2006) 37 Cal.4th 759. In
Shelton, the Supreme Court addressed a single issue, holding that a
certificate of probable cause was necessary to challenge a court's
authority to challenge a “lid” sentence after a guilty plea. (Id. at p.
763.) The Supreme Court never addressed the relationship between
the stalking statute and section 654, and defendant's contention to
the contrary is specious.

It is clear the stalking conviction can be based on acts separate
from those used to support the other convictions. The incidents
with the unloaded revolver and at the motel support a stalking
conviction but were not related to the child endangerment, assault
with a firearm, false imprisonment, or brandishing convictions.

1 Defendant's claim is therefore without merit.

2 (Respondent's Exhibit A, at 12-13.)

3 Federal habeas relief is only available for violations of the United States
4 Constitution or federal law. See Estelle v. McGuire, 502 U.S. 62, 67-68 (1991); see also
5 Middleton v. Cupp, 768 F.2d 1083, 1085 (9th Cir. 1985) (habeas relief is not available for state
6 law errors that are not of a constitutional dimension). Accordingly, petitioner's claim alleging a
7 violation of California Penal Code § 654 is not cognizable in this action. See Cacoperdo v.
8 Demosthenes, 37 F.3d 504, 507 (9th Cir. 1994) ("The decision whether to impose sentences
9 concurrently or consecutively is a matter of state criminal procedure and is not within the
10 purview of federal habeas corpus."); Watts v. Bonneville, 879 F.2d 685, 687 (9th Cir. 1989)
11 (alleged violation of section 654 is state law claim not cognizable in federal habeas proceeding).

12 After conducting an AEDPA review, the undersigned recommends that this claim
13 be denied.

14 Conclusion

15 For all of the above reasons, the undersigned recommends that petitioner's
16 application for a writ of habeas corpus be denied. If petitioner files objections, he shall also
17 address whether a certificate of appealability should issue and, if so, why and as to which issues.
18 A certificate of appealability may issue under 28 U.S.C. § 2253 "only if the applicant has made a
19 substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(3).

20 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that petitioner's application for a
21 writ of habeas corpus be denied.

22 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District
23 Judge assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within twenty-
24 one days after being served with these findings and recommendations, any party may file written
25 objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Such a document should be captioned
26 "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Findings and Recommendations." Any response to the

1 objections shall be filed and served within fourteen days after service of the objections. The
2 parties are advised that failure to file objections within the specified time may waive the right to
3 appeal the District Court's order. Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991).

4 DATED: November 24, 2010

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KENDALL J. NEWMAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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