

EDUCATION

U.D. cops: Student arrested in school 'threat,' another unfounded

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UPPERDARBY » A pair of alleged threats against Upper Darby High School weaved its way through social media platforms, text messages and a string of other schools late this week, but police said none of them were credible.

Upper Darby Police Superintendent Michael Chitwood said Friday afternoon that one student from Upper Darby High School is being charged for making a terroristic threat Thursday and a separate threat circulated Thursday evening went unfounded.

"No one hurt and there was no active threat," said Chitwood. "We worked very closely with the schools,

school security and the administration."

It started Thursday morning when students at Archbishop Prendergast and Monsignor Bonner Catholic High School were part of a lockdown drill training session. According to Chitwood, a student during that training texted a friend at another local private school saying they were on lockdown because there was someone at Upper Darby High School with a gun. That person then texts their friends at Upper Darby saying there's a student there with a gun.

Upper Darby High administrators were made aware of this alleged threat and the building was put in lockdown around 9:30. Police arrived at the school to assess the situation and

begin an investigation. A less severe shelter-in-place mode was called later that morning at which point a student made a post on Instagram that allegedly said, "I have a gun and will hurt everyone," according to Chitwood. Upper Darby detectives who specialize in technology and social media platforms began an immediate investigation and tracked down the student.

That student has been charged as a juvenile; the name of the student will not be released.

"It was miscommunication that led to a bit of drama that subsequently led to a student posting what he posted on there (Instagram)," said Chitwood of the chain of events that was, in reality, not an immediate threat to Bonner

and Prendie or Upper Darby high schools.

On Thursday evening, an Upper Darby High School parent reached out to police saying their child saw an Instagram post saying there will be a shooting in the school front lobby at 9:45 a.m. the next day.

Chitwood put a number of uniform and plain clothes officers at the high school Friday morning to mitigate any threat, but nothing occurred at the school.

According to Chitwood, it was only a message that was delivered to a child to their father. Police tried to find the origin of the threat but it turned out to be a "whisper down the lane" event without a legitimate level of threat to the building. No one has been



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Upper Darby High School.

charged in this case.

No one was hurt in either school building as police investigated the potentially violent claims.

"Ninety percent of it is b---t," Chitwood said of the pair of allegations that cranked up a lot of concern from parents, students and school administrators. He said social media plays a role in spreading the threatening language around even when it turns out to be a non-existent threat. "It was totally fabricated, but social media plays a role

and parents, kids panic. Social media has a way of creating panic in a community especially when it involves these school threats.

"There was nothing at all active in any of the incidents."

Upper Darby Police maintain a presence at the major corridor of Lansdowne Avenue between State and Garrett roads each school day where the two schools are located. Chitwood said there are 10 officers there to help ensure safe dismissals

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