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UD Public Safety responds after social media shooting threat

November 14, 2022

Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Tori Miller | News Editor

UD Public Safety responded to a social media shooting threat at Marianist Hall on Nov. 7. The overall communication response has been highly criticized within the UD community, but Public Safety’s quick action to bring a suspect into custody without harming anyone was universally commended.

To help understand and unpack decisions made by UD Public Safety and UD’s Executive Emergency Response Team, Chief Savalas Kidd and the team spoke with Flyer News.

“We have received feedback from numerous sources, and are considering that as we look at proactive training for the community, facility assessments, additional leadership training and how to structure and whom to include in crisis exercises,” said UD’s Executive Emergency Response Team.

The response team implored campus to consider two scenarios when not knowing what or where the threat is.

Canceling classes could be sending community members into harm’s way and asking people to shelter in place or lock down could be creating a hostage situation or be hampering our ability to respond to individuals who are unnecessarily entrapped.

Kidd discussed his view on the crisis situation and the crucial considerations when evaluating the credibility of threats prior to sending community messages.

“As it relates to communication, we have to be extremely careful not to put false information out there,” Kidd said. “We try to gain more information through investigating the threat itself, while at the same time providing safety and security measures for the community.”

According to Kidd, emergency events are fluid and can have different responses depending on the situation at hand. Kidd also emphasized that the credibility of threats must be evaluated before the information is shared because it could incite panic among the community and cannot be revoked once publicly announced.

To combat safety concerns the threat has raised, UD Public safety has been working with other departments related to safety planning.

“A lot of debrief and conversation throughout the institution has taken place. No determinations or decisions have been made, but we are certainly engaged in active conversations.” Kidd said.

UD Public Safety alerted the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force in Dayton, Ohio about the potential shooting threat and used the provided information for further action. The FBI Cincinnati Field Office immediately utilized legal and investigative resources to identify the account holder who posted the statements.

“This incident demonstrates the important partnership between the FBI and local police who work together each day to help protect our community,” said FBI Cincinnati Special Agent in Charge J. William Rivers. “While the FBI provided assistance in this investigation, the University of Dayton Department of Public Safety led this effort and utilized all available resources to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff at UD.”

The FBI has seen an increase in hoax threats to schools, universities, and other public buildings in Central and Southern Ohio. These threats can have significant impacts on the community and are treated seriously by law enforcement and first responders, written in a university-wide statement.

“No matter how you plan, how much you prepare, you’re never going to have a perfect response. We just try to mitigate and lessen certain things,” Kidd said.

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