

Beat: Miscellaneous

NY man arrested after reporting fake threat against President Obama

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USPA News - A New York man was arrested Wednesday after he admitted to calling 911 in late August and falsely reported that his former roommate was traveling to New York City to kill President Barack Obama, which prompted a major emergency response to find the man, prosecutors said. The incident began at around 10:28 a.m. local time on August 29 when 911 emergency operators at the Hudson Valley Traffic Management Center in New York received a phone call regarding a plot to kill President Barack Obama, who arrived in New York City that afternoon to attend a political event.

The caller, who only identified himself as Hassan, told the 911 operator that his former roommate was planning to travel to New York from Connecticut to kill Obama, and added that he would arrive in the area between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. that day. He also claimed that his former roommate was in possession of an AK-47 assault rifle and an AR-15. After the call was received, during which 'Hassan' provided his former roommate's name and vehicle description, dozens of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers were dispatched in an attempt to locate the suspect and his vehicle. At about 2 p.m., Secret Service agents arrived at the Connecticut residence of the suspect, whose name was not included in court documents released on Wednesday. Soon after agents arrived, the Secret Service initiated wireless tracking on the cellphone number of the suspect, which led authorities to issue an alert to law enforcement in both Connecticut and New York, describing the suspect as being possibly armed and wanted for questioning by the Secret Service. It would take until around 10:30 p.m. that day for the suspect and his vehicle to be located in Hamden, Connecticut. "After searching Suspect-1's car and apartment, agents found no evidence supporting Caller-1's allegations," Secret Service Special Agent Todd Garavanta wrote in a complaint unsealed on Wednesday. "Suspect-1 cooperated with law enforcement and was transported to the New Haven Secret Service office for an interview." During the interview, the suspect indicated his surprise at being sought by the Secret Service and provided law enforcement with a detailed account of his whereabouts throughout the day, which was corroborated by wireless cellphone tracking. He also told officers that he believed that Juan Medina, 30, a close friend of his girlfriend, was responsible for the call, explaining that Medina had always disliked him. When Secret Service agents and local police officers went to the home of the man's girlfriend in Yonkers, New York, Medina answered the door and told officers that he lived with the woman, whom he also described as being his girlfriend. He subsequently acknowledged that he disliked the former suspect, saying that he wanted to "kick his ass," but denied making the 911 call. When officers interviewed the woman later in the day, she denied that Medina was her boyfriend. Medina, while being interviewed on September 3, again denied having made the 911 call and provided a written statement, after which he agreed to take a voluntary polygraph test to prove his innocence. When the test results indicated that Medina was being "deceptive," the defendant admitted that he made the 911 call using a pre-paid burner cellphone. "Medina said that after he made the 911 call, he sold the cellphone to an unknown male," Agent Garavanta said in court documents. "Medina told the Secret Service that he has never heard Suspect-1 discuss a plot to kill the President, and that he has never seen Suspect-1 in possession of automatic weapons. Medina said that he made the 911 call because he does not approve of the relationship between Suspect-1 and [the woman]." Medina, who added in a written statement that he wanted to get his friend's boyfriend "in trouble," has been charged with one count of making false statements to federal authorities, which carries a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison.

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