

UPDATE: Teen charged with terrorist threats facing mental evaluation

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EDWARDSVILLE - A **Godfrey** teen facing multiple terrorism-related charges has been ordered to receive a mental fitness evaluation to deem if he is in fact fit to stand trial.

Keaun Cook, 18, of the **1300 block of Galahad** in Godfrey, was charged on Sept. 1 with one count of providing material support for terrorism and one count of making a terrorist threat. Both charges are Class X felonies, which carry a maximum sentence of 40 years. He was being held at the **Madison County Jail** on a \$150,000 bond, but that bond has since been revoked, **Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons** said. After two hearings in front of **Third Circuit Judge Jennifer Hightower**, Hightower has raised concerns about Cook's fitness to stand trial.

"The judge has seen him twice, and I've only been present for one of those," Gibbons said. "I was in the courtroom on his last appearance, and he certainly seemed confused about what was happening. I'm not sure if that was genuine. That's something for an evaluation to decide."

Gibbons said the court and Judge Hightower were practicing an "abundance of caution" with this case. He said Cook's evaluation may last as long as a few weeks. Until that evaluation is completed, however, Gibbons assured Cook would be held at the Madison County Jail.

"As long as he is locked up, I am confident the community is safe," he said. "Once we get the report back, we can keep the motion to revoke his bond."

If Cook is found unfit to stand trial, he will be placed in the custody of **Alton Mental Health**, Gibbons said. Being found unfit to stand trial does not necessarily mean Cook will never face trial, Gibbons said.

"The court will continue to review the case," he said. "It's not unusual for them to someday become fit for trial. It will not affect the court ruling, it will only delay it."

When Cook's case does come to trial, a hypothetical finding of him being unfit to stand trial may not even aid in an insanity plea, Gibbons said.

"There are very different guidelines between being found unfit to stand trial and being found not guilty by reason of insanity," he said.

Cook's charges came as a result of an investigation by the **Madison County Sheriff's Office**, which received a call regarding threats Cook allegedly made. Upon further investigation, a deputy allegedly discovered Cook had links to an established terrorist organization.

Gibbons said he could not comment on which group that may have been, but Cook's Facebook page contained an image of a decapitated man with the headline "**ISIS**

beheads elderly man accused of witchcraft." He added a quote to the image, stating simply "American feast."

No bomb-making materials were found following a search of Cook's residence by that deputy. In a previous interview with **Riverbender.com**, Gibbons said a mass casualty event could occur without the use of bombs and guns. He used knives and automobiles as examples of weapons utilized in other terrorist-backed attacks.

Gibbons did not comment about the potential targets Cook was allegedly planning to strike, but did say the nature of the threats were serious.

"This wasn't a kid making up a bomb threat to get out of finals," he said. "He was actively communicating with an organized group about planning an act, which may have resulted in mass casualties. This was serious."

Officials speaking on the condition of anonymity confirmed Cook's alleged targets included schools, among other places.

Cook appeared before Judge Hightower via a video link shortly after he was taken into custody. He refused a public defender at that time. At his last appearance, earlier this week, Gibbons said he was appointed a public defender. He said he was not sure if Cook completely understood what was occurring around him, but added that did not necessarily mean Cook was unfit to stand trial.

"I'm not sure if it was genuine, if he was faking or hadn't had a lawyer explain it to him yet," Gibbons said.