

State's Attorney Gibbons ready to "go full steam ahead" with Keaun Cook prosecution

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – Madison County State’s Attorney Thomas Gibbons and staff are ready to “go full steam ahead” in terms of prosecution of **Keaun Cook, 19, of Godfrey**, after a ruling by a judge this week.

Cook was charged with one count of Making a Terrorist Threat and one count of Material Support for Terrorism, both Class X Felonies.

Judge Jennifer Hightower first ordered that Cook undergo mental evaluation to determine his fitness for trial. **Associate Judge Phil Alfeld** delivered the news to attorneys Wednesday that Cook has been found mentally fit to stand trial.

“I was not surprised by the finding,” Gibbons said of the judge’s ruling. “It was important for the judge to confirm the fact that the defendant was fit, so this just allows us to continue with our prosecution unhindered. It was absolutely his intent to do a massive amount of damage and a lot of harm.”

Cook would have had to be somebody who didn’t care about other people and didn’t have the kind of feelings the rest of us consider normal, Gibbons said.

When asked exactly where Cook planned to execute the terrorist activities, Gibbons said there was more than one jurisdiction involved in Madison County, but the threats were mostly around the area he lived.

In terms of Cook’s prosecution, Gibbons said this is something the state’s attorney’s office thinks is serious and potentially damaging and has to be dealt with in most serious terms.

Gibbons said that the impending prosecution will be dependent on what steps the defense takes next.

“The prosecutors have very little control over the timing of these types of cases,” Gibbons said. “We are required to have cases ready for trial with our partners in law enforcement in 120 days. The defense can institute delays that keep us from moving forward, but that is simply a function of the Constitution and criminal procedure law.”

Based on what his office and law enforcement have learned, the situation Cook was trying to create could have had “devastating impact on the community,” Gibbons said.

Cook’s home residence is located in the **1300 block of Sir Galahad Lane, Godfrey**. Cook has been held without bail after a Grand Jury indictment. He faces a penalty range up to 70 years in prison.

Cook's grandmother, Debra Thomas, has argued that her grandson suffers from mental illness struggles and helped with the argument that he is not fit to stand trial.

Gibbons again pointed out how quickly and thoroughly the **Madison County Sheriff's Department** and other law enforcement acted in the Cook case.

“It just goes to show you how important it is for us to have the kind of excellent law enforcement we have, Gibbons said. "It is critical for our community to continue to invest in the very best with our sheriff's department and local law enforcement agencies so we can keep doing the work that needs to be done to protect the community.”