

UPDATE: Young man charged with aiding ISIS to be transferred to DHS facility for mental health treatment

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Keaun Cook, 21, of Godfrey was arrested in July 2016 for allegedly providing material support to terrorists and making terrorist threats – both felonies.

Since then, he has been in the custody of the Madison County Jail, where he was accused of assaulting a jailer in 2018. His grandmother, Debra Thomas, who called authorities on him in 2016, said her grandson is mentally ill and was not getting the treatment he deserved in jail while being treated as a terrorist. Thomas said in previous interviews with Riverbender.com Cook had always suffered from attention hyper deficit disorder (ADHD) and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and developed schizophrenia after seeing his mother die when he was only 14 years old. Now, after being held nearly three years – sometimes, Thomas claimed, in isolation, Cook will be remanded to a facility to treat his mental illness.

Thomas told reporters Cook was yelling about ISIS without fully understanding what he was saying. Outside of schizophrenia, she said her grandson may have been abusing K-2, a common replacement for marijuana formerly sold at gas stations and marketed as potpourri. Some of the effects of smoking K-2 included psychotic episodes, paranoia and high anxiety.

Evidence against Cook provided to Riverbender.com by Thomas showed a Facebook Messenger conversation between Cook and someone he believed to be affiliated with ISIS in which the person exchanged a traditional Arabic salutation with Cook before Cook said he believed he was being watched, possibly due to the popularity of movies featuring Keanu Reeves and the similarity between Cook and Reeves's names.

While originally investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) due to possible connections to international terrorism, Thomas said the federal law enforcement arm dropped the investigation soon after. Thomas told Riverbender.com the FBI assured her Madison County would take the investigation and get her grandson the help she believed he so drastically needed.

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons said Cook was recently found unfit to stand trial after meetings with his office and Cook's defense attorney Jeff Weishaupt. During these meetings, a judge had ruled to remand Cook to the custody of the Department of Human Service (DHS) as long ago as May 2018, but Gibbons said DHS had yet to claim custody of Cook.

On Feb. 6, 2019, Judge Alfeld found Cook unfit to stand trial following 2016 and 2017 examinations finding Cook to be in fact fit to stand trial. After this most recent ruling, Cook was sent to a DHS facility for treatment designed to help him regain fitness. Since this order was filed, DHS personnel have visited Cook in the Madison County Jail, a release from Gibbons stated.

“With the recent engagement by DHS, we are confident Mr. Cook will be transferred from the Madison County Jail to a secured DHS facility very soon, allowing him to receive the treatment he needs in a facility designed for such purpose,” the release said.

Gibbons said he spoke to Thomas Friday regarding her grandson, saying she seemed pleased with the developments. He was also in contact with the NAACP, who has been advocating for Cook's mental health treatment. In the release, it was stated the Madison County Jail was not properly outfitted to provide the mental health Cook needed.

“It is definitely where he needs to be, there is no question about that,” Gibbons said of Cook's transfer to the DHS facility.