



OFFICIAL MEDIA RELEASE
KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT



Issued on behalf of 'Titan', the North-west regional organised crime unit (NW ROCU) by Merseyside Police press office

**** 'Titan' is NOT a unit or department within Merseyside Police. It is a standalone regional unit made up of police officers and civilian support staff from all six police forces in the North-west of England****

STARTS:

A teenager in Wirral, Merseyside has this morning been arrested by detectives from 'Titan', the North-west's regional organised crime unit, as part of a joint investigation with the FBI into bomb hoaxes and threats made against schools, media companies, airports and airlines in the United States of America.

The 16-year-old was arrested at 7am at his home address in Bidston on suspicion of several offences which officers in Titan and the FBI believe have been committed using Skype, Twitter, MSN Messenger and email.

Titan officers, supported by colleagues from Merseyside Police's Wirral division, executed a warrant under Section 8 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and carried out a comprehensive search of the property. A number of computers and mobile phones were seized and will be thoroughly examined as part of the joint investigation.

Specialist Titan detectives from the North-west regional cybercrime unit (RCCU) have taken the boy into their custody where he will be interviewed about the alleged offences.

The arrest comes as a result of information shared with Titan by the FBI following a series of incidents in the United States where schools, universities, news media organisations, airports, airlines were targeted.

Between September 4th last year and April 10th this year, a large number of bomb hoax communications were sent by an unknown person to schools and universities in Michigan as well as airlines and airports in the US.

The threats were largely made on Twitter and during a period in January several flights had to be grounded and two others escorted by military jets due to threats made on social media.

As well as the bomb hoax allegations, the 16-year-old will also be spoken to about a series of 'swatting' offences committed by an unknown person against police departments and airports in the United States between October 29th last year and March 26th.

‘Swatting’ is a term used to describe malicious phone calls or other communications to law enforcement agencies in the US whereby the offender provides false information about a fictitious threat or incident at a specific location. The common aim is to provoke an armed tactical response from the police, who often deploy a SWAT team or equivalent to the scene when in fact they are not needed.

Head of Operations at Titan, Detective Superintendent Jason Hudson said:

“This investigation is a prime example of how specialist police units here in the UK can work side-by-side with law enforcement agencies in other countries such as the US to tackle a new breed of criminality that is not restricted by any kind of borders.

“We have acted on intelligence provided by the FBI in relation to their investigations into a large number of threats committed in the US and developed that information to the point where today’s arrest has been proportionate and necessary.

“We are still in the early stages of this investigation and there is still much work to be done. There is a young man who needs to be interviewed by my specialist officers who will be mindful of his age but also the seriousness of the allegations. We have also recovered some computer equipment and mobile phones which we will analyse for evidential purposes and our findings will of course be shared with our partners in the FBI.

“Their investigation identified some extremely serious threats to institutions and companies which had major implications for these organisations, the individuals who work for them and the wider public.

“We are committed to working with the FBI and other agencies throughout the world to pool our resources and share the information we have in order to tackle the wealth of cybercrime that is now posing such a risk to the public who we have a duty to protect.

“Cyber-crime can be committed by anyone, anywhere in the world but each offence has a victim and there are serious repercussions for anyone caught being involved in these types of offences. They are not a harmless prank and people need to realise that their behaviour online does not exist in a bubble and has an effect and consequences in the real world.

“As Titan and other cyber-crime units in the UK continue to build our capability, technology and skills to tackle this new threat, we need people and businesses to better protect themselves from online crime by understanding the risks, implementing strong security measures so that they can enjoy the opportunities the Internet now provides us all but without making themselves vulnerable to cyber criminals.”

Footage of today's warrant can be viewed and downloaded for media use at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHDOL4qZ-nQ>

To find out more about all of Titan's other investigations and operations and to access material such as photographs of seized drugs and weapons visit www.titanrocu.org.uk

You can also follow Titan on Twitter @TITANROCU or find us on Facebook and You Tube via the Titan website.

ENDS

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