

SUBJECT: Education

Fox 5

Authorities investigating threats against Atlanta area schools

By: Staff Writer

ATLANTA - Threats made against Atlanta area schools have district officials working with law enforcement to keep everyone safe.

The threats have come in against schools in the city of Atlanta, as well as Gwinnett and Walton Counties.

A South Gwinnett High School student is accused of posting a threat against the school on social media and is now facing charges, according to officials with Gwinnett County Schools.

On Saturday, South Gwinnett High School Principal Monique Lee sent out a letter saying in part, "Snellville Police Department along with our School Resource Officer conducted an active investigation resulting in the identification of the individual who made the threat. Law enforcement will be proceeding with appropriate charges."

Gwinnett County Schools spokesperson Sloan Roach said the student who posted the threat is a 16-year-old male 10th grader. He has been charged with making terroristic threats and will also face disciplinary action from the school, according to Roach.

Atlanta Police, the GBI, and the FBI are also investigating threats made against four Atlanta Public Schools. Those schools are Maynard Jackson, South Atlanta, Carver and Washington High Schools.

APS said the schools have implemented comprehensive safety and security measures and all safety protocols will be strictly enforced.

In Walton County, the sheriff's office is looking into a threat made against Monroe Area High School. The school said it has taken immediate action and will have an increased security presence throughout the day.

<http://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/authorities-investigating-threats-against-local-schools>

SUBJECT: APS

11 Alive

Four Atlanta high schools threatened with shootings

By: Adrienne Haney

ATLANTA — Yet again, school officials have had to respond to a threat made against a metro Atlanta school.

On Sunday, Atlanta Public School officials confirmed they were investigating after they were made aware of threats made against Maynard Jackson High School, South Atlanta High School, Carver High School, and Washington High School that was posted on Instagram Friday, Feb. 23.

It comes just hours after reports surfaced of a threat against South Gwinnett High School, and days after arrests in Bartow, Gordon and Gwinnett for similar threats.

The district said Atlanta Public Schools Police Department is investigating the threat with the Atlanta Police Department's homeland security, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

In addition, APS said they have "comprehensive" safety and security measures at their schools and all safety and security protocols will be enforced.

"School safety is everyone's business," the statement said. "The posting or re-posting of threats of violence against schools on social media is a criminal offense and APS will prosecute these incidents to the full extent of the law."

The flood of threats against schools in the wake of a deadly mass shooting in Parkland, Florida that left 17 dead has parents and students on high alert. It's also the reason behind a new movement pushing for new safety measures to prevent another mass school shooting.

"I believe that if we all work together as youth and we get our message across, that change will happen," one student told 11Alive.

Students across the nation, and here in the metro area, will participate in the March 14 "National School Walkout Day," during which students will leave class for 17 minutes to honor the 17 killed in Parkland, Florida. Ten days later, students will hold a "March for Our Lives" rally, and then on April 20, students will host another national school walkout to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the Columbine School Shooting.

Meanwhile, school districts across the metro area continue to take any hint of a threat very seriously, and are urging anyone with information about threats to call Crime Stoppers at 404-577-8477 or their local police department.

<http://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/four-atlanta-high-schools-threatened-with-shootings/85-523323729>

SUBJECT: APD

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Atlanta's police recruits: hard to find and hard to keep

By: Nicole Carr and Sheila Schutt

One smoked pot. Another lied about his family's involvement with a gang. A third shot and wounded the boyfriend of a woman he'd befriended on social media.

All three men were in training to become city of Atlanta police officers and were fired after the department learned of their alleged crimes.

Channel 2 Action News found five other recruits who APD fired for criminal or ethical violations in 2016 and 2017. All told, 17 percent of the 362 recruits on APD's payroll during that two-year period were dismissed or resigned.

The findings come as Atlanta is still 264 officers short of its years-long goal of having 2,000 officers on the force.

"We have an issue with retaining officers that we have now, and we have an issue with recruiting," said Atlanta City Council President Felicia Moore. "I didn't know we had an issue with the recruits, as well."

Moore added: "We are ... in desperate need to get our ranks up, and (I'm) hoping that we aren't cutting any corners to do that."

Three recruits were fired after attending a backyard barbecue, where two of them allegedly smoked marijuana and one fired a gun. The third was accused of lying to a neighbor about the shot coming from his yard.

Another recruit was let go for lying about gang tattoos and another one was accused of impersonating a police officer during a traffic stop. Still another allegedly stole a classmate's ballistics vest.

Former recruit James Ball was involved in the most serious infraction that led to his firing.

Ball is accused of shooting a man on Superior Drive in Gwinnett County on Christmas Eve. Ball told the 911 dispatcher that he was an off-duty Atlanta police officer, according to the police report.

But at the time, Ball was actually an APD recruit who had not finished training.

APD declined an on-camera interview but said the agency was “selective” about who it brought into its 35-week training program. In 2017, the agency selected only 105 of the more than 1,200 applications it received for officer training.

APD spends an average of \$93,667 to train each recruit. The department declined to break down how much it spent on the 63 recruits who quit or were fired, none of whom completed their training.

With Atlanta still short of its goal of hiring 2,000 officers, Champion said the city was “backed in a corner.”

<https://www.myajc.com/news/crime--law/atlanta-police-recruits-hard-find-and-hard-keep/kBlgnh3p9O8BEuFQPg5rqO/>

SUBJECT: Education

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Arm teachers at school? Most metro Atlanta districts say no

By: Marlon A. Walker

Laura Morse said the idea of adding first-responder duties to teachers by giving them guns is not one she welcomes.

President Donald Trump said Wednesday he would like to see some teachers armed and trained to assist during school shootings, saying they would impact a situation faster than it would take law enforcement to arrive.

After last week's shooting at a high school in Parkland, Fla., where 17 students and staff died, most metro Atlanta school districts remain vehemently opposed to arming teachers to deter potential school shooters, leaning more toward a bigger law enforcement presence to prevent incidents. State law gives school districts the authority to decide whether staff can carry guns at school. No Georgia school district allows staff to have guns on school campuses, but Bleckley County Schools, about 90 minutes southeast of Atlanta, wrote last week on Twitter it was considering a policy that would allow staff to carry guns.

Morse, who has two children attending DeKalb County's Lakeside High School, said teachers already are overwhelmed dealing with everyday concerns related to class sizes and standardized testing without being trained to handle a potential attack.

"My mother was a teacher," Morse said. "We all know teachers don't make enough money. They're overwhelmed. To add this responsibility would be too much. Outside of thinking about all the things that could go wrong with that, you have now exited an adult from a space where children need an adult to contain (their anxiety)."

Education experts say there is no immediate fix, but add that if teachers were to be armed they would need the same level of training as law enforcement.

"There's training to be a teacher, and then there's training to be a law enforcement officer," DeKalb County School District Superintendent Steve Green said in a statement Thursday. "Both are unique careers with a specific purpose. We believe our teachers can be most effective by focusing on the task at hand — deep teaching and learning — while the district and its schools work closely with law enforcement on a collaboration of undercover and uniformed officers."

Marquenta Sands Hall, Atlanta Public Schools' executive director of safety and security, echoed those sentiments at a news conference last week.

“We want to arm our teachers with awareness and education and protocols that they can use so that when they show up in the classrooms in the mornings they can do what they have committed to do and that is teach,” she said.

Clayton County Public Schools Superintendent Morcease Beasley said through a spokeswoman that the issue was “more complicated than a simple yes or no (for or against); it will require a multifaceted response from more than a single entity making a decision.”

The nation's two big teachers unions — The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers — also decried proposals to arm teachers.

<https://www.myajc.com/news/local-education/arm-teachers-school-most-metro-atlanta-districts-say/yDHZWP1zYUuCpOT4eTnEWN/>

SUBJECT: APS

Patch.com

Atlanta Schools Threat: Police Investigating, Security Upped

By: Doug Gross

ATLANTA, GA — Law enforcement agencies including the FBI are investigating a threat made on social media aimed at four Atlanta high schools.

On Monday, an Atlanta Public Schools spokesman said the threat was made Friday on Instagram, mentioning Maynard Jackson High School, South Atlanta High School, Carver High School and Washington High School.

The Atlanta Public Schools Police Department is investigating the threat, along with the Atlanta Police Department, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, said schools spokesman Ian Smith.

"At Atlanta Public Schools, the safety and security of all our students and staff is our top priority and we take any threat against our schools very seriously," Smith said in a written statement.

Schools across the nation have been on high alert since 17 people, many of them students, were killed and 16 more injured in a Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Threats to schools, many of them turning out to be unsubstantiated, have skyrocketed.

According to The Educator's School Safety Network, there have been 532 school-based threats or violent incidents in the U.S. since the Parkland shooting — an average of 88.7 per school day. In all, 490 schools in 49 states have been threatened or had actual violence happen, according to the group.

Smith said the Atlanta school system has put safety and security measures in place at schools and "all safety and security protocols will be strictly enforced by our staff in accordance with district policy." He also warned that any threat to schools, even ones that are supposedly jokes, will be taken seriously.

"School safety is everyone's business," Smith said. "The posting or reposting of threats of violence against schools on social media is a criminal offense and APS will prosecute these incidents to the full extent of the law. "

In a letter to the school community, APS Superintendent Meria Joel Carstarphen said students and parents may notice a stepped-up security presence at schools.

"All safety and security protocols will be strictly enforced by our staff in accordance with district policy, and students will be reminded of the seriousness and criminal consequences of posting or reposting threats of violence on social media," she wrote.

Anyone with information about a threat made against local schools is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 404-577-8477. The tips may be made anonymously.

<https://patch.com/georgia/atlanta/atlanta-schools-threat-police-investigating-security-upped>

SUBJECT: APD

WSB-TV

Atlanta police need to fill more than 250 positions, records show

By: Staff Writer

ATLANTA - It has been a longtime problem facing the public safety for the city of Atlanta – not having a full force to patrol the city streets.

Channel 2 Action News has learned that the authorized strength for the city of Atlanta police force is 2,026 officers.

Right now, the Atlanta Police Department currently has 1,762 positions filled, including a class of 71 recruits currently going through the academy.

That leaves 264 open spots on the force.

In a Channel 2 Action News Investigation from November, Atlanta police told us fewer candidates are making it past the first round of training, and police are now traveling to other cities to recruit.

“We are having a hard time hiring police. I think you can turn on TV and see the challenges. Right now, there (is) a lot of scrutiny on police,” Atlanta Police Deputy Chief of Support Services Stacie Gibbs told us at the time.

On top of that, through an Open Records Request, Channel 2 Action News has learned that of the 362 recruits on the payroll in 2016 and 2017, 63 were dismissed or resigned. That is 17 percent of the class.

Staffing a full force has been a problem reaching back to the previous police chief, George Turner.

"Recruiting is a challenge for all of us at this point, not because of anything one particular agency is doing or not doing. I think it's because of the atmosphere we find ourselves in, in public safety," Turner told us in August 2016.

<http://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/atlanta/atlanta-police-need-to-fill-more-than-250-positions-records-show/701403810>

SUBJECT: Hartsfield-Jackson Airport

Security Info Watch

Homeless fill Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport atrium overnight

By: McClatchy

Atlanta airport officials like to boast that Hartsfield-Jackson International is the world's busiest and most efficient airport, with a terminal that always looks "opening day fresh."

But over the past few months, the airport's domestic terminal has become more known for being filled with homeless people overnight and into the early morning hours.

For years, there have periodically been some homeless people at the airport, which is a public place open 24 hours a day. But the closure last year of downtown Atlanta's Peachtree-Pine shelter, which housed as many as 500 people, combined with a prolonged spate of frigid temperatures, has resulted in larger numbers of homeless seeking out a place to escape the cold.

The City of Atlanta opens warming centers when the temperature drops. Still, over the past couple of months many homeless have been taking MARTA to the Atlanta airport stop, settling down in the comfy chairs in the domestic terminal atrium or stretching out on the floor.

For some travelers passing through the airport, it's a startling sight.

Police facing an 'epidemic'

There have already been incidents involving homeless at the airport.

On Jan. 28, a homeless man exposed himself near the airport domestic terminal atrium, according to a police report.

The man, who was arrested for indecent exposure, had been released from prison in September and had an "extensive arrest record dating back to 2001 with several violent crime charges" including simple battery, carrying a concealed weapon, aggravated assault and felony murder, according to the report. "The arrestee stated he's homeless and he comes out to the airport to sleep."

Last year, a homeless man was arrested at Hartsfield-Jackson with a machete, a 10-inch butcher knife and five scissors, according to police.

Police officers had raised concerns about "having to be hands off on the homeless" for a period of time recently, said Vince Champion, Southeast regional director for the International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

Officers in the last couple of weeks gained more authority for enforcement to address the issue of homeless at the airport, he said. A loitering ordinance dictates that it's "unlawful for any person to use or remain in the airport for the purpose of lodging," except in the case of severe weather, flight delays or other disruption to airport activity.

Yet that hasn't stopped homeless people from going to Hartsfield-Jackson.

Police officers at the airport "stand ready to address any criminal activity, regardless of the source," according to Atlanta Police Department spokesman Carlos Campos. "They are also committed to helping any individual experiencing homelessness they encounter to understand the resources for assistance available to them."

Hartsfield-Jackson plans to focus on striking partnerships to help homeless to find resources to find shelter, including plans for dedicated Travelers Aid services to assist the homeless at the airport with finding resources.

Champion, with the police officers union, also said the real cause of the problem at the airport "is a societal issue."

"There's not as many shelters for the homeless to go to and they're trying to find a place," Champion said. "The homeless problem at the airport is the homeless problem, period."

<http://www.securityinfowatch.com/news/12395639/homeless-fill-atlantas-hartsfield-jackson-airport-atrium-overnight>

SUBJECT: City Council

Atlanta Business Chronicle

Atlanta City Council eliminates cash bonds

By: Dave Williams

The Atlanta City Council voted late Monday to do away with requiring cash bonds for suspects charged with most minor offenses.

But the unanimous vote came only after a lengthy, contentious debate over which offenses should qualify under the ordinance and which should still require cash bonds.

Supporters said forcing suspects picked up on non-violent misdemeanor charges to remain in jail simply because they can't afford to bail themselves out is an injustice.

"It is important that we not have wealth-based detention," Councilwoman Marci Overstreet said. "You should not be sitting in jail just because you don't have the money to get out."

Council members agreed to amend the ordinance by adding a short list of offenses that still will require cash bonds, including suspects accused of soliciting a sexual act or those on probation or parole. However, the council rejected a second amendment to require cash bonds for a longer list of offenses, including aggressive panhandling.

"We need to be very careful in our zeal to protect personal liberty [and] realize some of these crimes have victims," Councilman Michael Julian Bond said.

Bond suggested the city's corrections department keep track of whether the rate of no-shows in court rises after the city stops requiring cash bonds. The ordinance is due to take effect 30 days after Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms signs it.

In other business, the council unanimously passed a resolution opposing legislation before the General Assembly calling for a state takeover of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2018/02/06/atlanta-city-council-eliminates-cash-bonds.html>