

Twitter post prompts arrest of teenager for “terrorist” threats against police

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Arrests of people making allegedly “threatening” statements towards local police throughout the country have continued. A teenager in Fort Worth, Texas was arrested for posting a Twitter photo of a rifle pointed at a police vehicle. In Chicago, Illinois a man was arrested after Facebook posts led police to search the place where he was staying, where a gun and ammunition were found.

These arrests come after the fatal shooting of two police officers the weekend before Christmas. They are part of increased nationwide surveillance of social media, criminalizing the rights protected in the free speech clause of the First Amendment in the name of national, state and city “security.”

The latest arrests follow several last week, including in New York, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Massachusetts and Vermont. While all the details of the cases are not clear, they have the character of punitive arrests as part of a general sweep aimed at suppressing all forms of opposition against police and police violence.

According to police reports, 17-year-old Montrae Toliver was arrested on Monday for making a Twitter post depicting him pointing a gun at a patrol car with the caption, “Should I do it? They Don’t Care For a Black Male Anyways.”

He is now being charged with making a “terroristic threat” against police, which by state laws is a felony. His bail is set at \$500. If convicted, Montrae Toliver could face 80 days to two years in a state jail and a fine of up to \$10,000. So far there has been no indication that the fact that he is a minor will be taken into consideration.

Reuters reports that there is no lawyer for Toliver listed in online jail records.

Toliver has said that a previous Twitter post clearly showed that the rifle was in fact an Airsoft pellet gun.

“It doesn’t matter that it wasn’t a real gun. It was a threat against an officer,” said police spokesperson Tracey Knight at a news conference Monday. “The threats are real, they are taken real and you will be found and arrested.”

In Chicago, Aries Woodfin was arrested after making a December 8 Facebook post where he allegedly said he would “kill cops and innocent white kids.” No specific time frame was indicated in the post, which is required for the legal definition of “threat.” Despite this, police then used the post to get a search warrant.

The charges against Woodfin are not related to his Facebook post. Using the fact that police found a .45-caliber pistol, spent bullet casings and a makeshift gun range in the basement of the house, he was charged in Cook County Criminal Court with illegal gun possession, a felony, along with misdemeanor charges of assault, failure to have a valid firearm owner’s identification card and disorderly conduct. He was ordered held without bond.

The person whose house was raided, Beatrice Franklin, is disputing the charges, saying that while Woodfin sometimes stayed at her house, it was not his home and that he didn’t own the weapons. “That gun that they found belonged to me,” Franklin said in comments to ABC7 Eyewitness News. “I am a licensed FOID card holder and I have paperwork stating that it’s mine. So no, it’s not his.”

“He was speaking his mind,” she said, referring to Woodfin’s anger at the decisions not to indict the killers of Eric Garner and Michael Brown. “He was expressing how he felt, which is what everyone else was doing on Facebook as well, expressing themselves. They were ranting and they were raving.”



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