

Israel arrests hacker linked to threats on U.S. Jewish centers

JERUSALEM (AP) — A 19-year-old American-Israeli Jew was arrested Thursday as the prime suspect in a wave of bomb threats against U.S. Jewish community centers, a startling turn in a case that had stoked fears of rising anti-Semitism in the United States.

The surprising arrest of the man, a hacker who holds dual Israeli and American citizenship, came after a trans-Atlantic investigation with the FBI and other international law enforcement agencies. U.S. Jewish groups welcomed the breakthrough in the case, which drawn condemnation from President Donald Trump.

Israeli police described the suspect as a hacker, but said his motives were still unclear.

"He's the guy who was behind the JCC threats," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said, referring to the scores of anonymous threats phoned in to Jewish community centers in the U.S. over the past two months.

Police banned publication of his name, but said he was a dual citizen and would remain in custody until at least March 30. During the arrest raid, they said he tried to grab an officer's gun but was stopped by another officer.

The young man appeared briefly in court in the central Israeli city of Rishon Letzion. He wore khaki pants and a blue sweater that he used to cover his face as he walked past reporters. He made no comment.

His lawyer, Galit Bash, said her client had a "very serious medical condition" that might have affected his behavior. She said the condition had prevented him from attending elementary school, high school or enlisting in the army, which is compulsory for most Jewish men.

"That's why the medical condition can actually affect the investigation," she said. "This is one of the things the judge told the police to check, to talk to his doctors, to get more documents and to investigate him according to his medical situation."

Channel 10 TV said the condition was a brain tumor. It also showed images of a large antenna outside the suspect's house in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon. Police said the suspect's father was also detained, apparently



AP Photo/Nir Keidar
A 19-year-old dual U.S.-Israeli citizen covers his face as he is brought to court in Rishon Lezion, Israel, Thursday.

because of the equipment. Late Thursday, police said the father's detention had been extended by eight days.

In Washington, the FBI confirmed the arrest of the main suspect.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said the Justice Department "will not tolerate the targeting of any community in the country on the basis of their religious beliefs." He called work by the FBI and Israeli police "outstanding."

Since Jan. 9, there have been more than 150 bomb threats against Jewish community centers and day schools in 37 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces, according to the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish group that battles anti-Semitism.

The threats led to evacuations, sent a chill through local Jewish communities and raised fears of rising anti-Semitism. Acts of vandalism on Jewish targets, including cemeteries, have added to those concerns.

As the number of threats grew, Trump was criticized for not speaking out. Then, late last month, he opened a speech to Congress by denouncing anti-Semitism. There was no immediate reaction from the White House to Thursday's arrest.

The ADL, JCC Association of America and Jewish Federations of North America all welcomed news of the arrest. But Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the ADL, said anti-Semitism in the U.S. remains a "very serious concern."

"JCCs and other institutions should not relax security measures or become less vigilant," he said.

Karen Dombey, whose child attends the David Posnack Jewish Community Center in Davie, Florida,

which was evacuated when it received threats Feb. 27 and March 7, said she was surprised that the suspect is an Israeli-American. About 500 students from kindergarten through high school attend classes at the center, where armed guards stood at its entrances on Thursday.

"I hope it doesn't happen again. I hope it stops. But the fact that it happened raises awareness that we are targeted even when we think we are not," Dombey said.

U.S. authorities have also arrested a former journalist from St. Louis, Juan Thompson, for allegedly threatening Jewish organizations and charged him with one count of cyberstalking.

But Israeli police described the local man as the primary suspect in the wave of threats.

Police said he used sophisticated "camouflage technologies" to disguise his voice and mask his location. They said a search of the teen's home uncovered antennas and satellite equipment.

"In sophisticated cyber activity that I cannot detail, we obtained what we obtained and of course exposed him and his equipment," national police chief Roni Alsheich told reporters. "This does not bring honor to the state of Israel of course. But I think it does bring respect to Israel's police."

Police said the threats had caused panic, "significant economic damage" and disrupted public order at locations around the world.

The man is also suspected of placing threatening phone calls to Australia, New Zealand and within Israel. They also said he had disrupted a Delta Airlines flight at New York's JFK airport in early 2015.

OTHER VIEWS

Divine providence

By RENEE LOVEJOY

Spirit calling unto spirit. Deep calling unto deep. For several weeks now, I had been astonished by how personally I received each week's writings on the Friday Religion page of the local newspaper. These articles, written in a way that mysteriously mirrored my own spiritually driven view of life. It was as if they had been written by my own hand. Clearly a kindred spirit. It was time for me to meet this gifted writer. To hear him preach. This pastor who spoke to me from just down the road a ways.

On the 30-minute trip I whispered, "Lord, I hope there is at least one person I know when I get there." It was a good thing I allowed a generous window of time for finding the church: I needed every minute of it. But then, when I finally saw the name on the beautiful old sign and turned in, I felt like I had arrived at where I belonged. Here was a sweet little old-fashioned, beautifully cared-for property, thankfully cooled and sheltered by large old shade trees, on this hot summer morning.

The driver in the car I had followed into the parking lot got out at the same time I did. We looked at each other and grinned. My friend Dee was here to talk about her gifted ministry to unwed mothers. She said, "Renee! Do you go here?!" No, I said, this is my very first time. She returned, "Mine too!"

But something seemed amiss when we walked through the doors of this little Lutheran Church. Though it was time for services to begin, and there was a congregation seated, there was no music. And no apparent musician. Puzzled, I walked down a short corridor, looking for the pastor. As I walked by a door, I saw someone donning clerical robes. I surprised myself by boldly asking, "Are you short a piano player this morning?"

He said, "Yes, I am." "I am a piano player, have played for churches for years," I said, not believing my fearlessness.

"Wonderful!" was his prompt response. Introducing myself I said, "I've never played for a Lutheran service before, or even attended one. I should tell you I am rock 'n roll gospel all the way."

"Even better!" he grinned, shaking my hand even more excitedly.

He explained that his piano player had had an accident, and he had just been informed about it a little earlier that morning. No time to put out a call.

He continued to beam at me and reflected, "I had so little faith in our Father meeting my need, that I didn't even think to pray for His intervention. And just look, He did it anyway."

I told him I was willing to give it a try, if I could look at the order of worship, and see if I knew any of the hymns they were using. By this moment, I was pretty sure that this was the work of our Father, and that there would be songs I knew. And to my delight and amazement, I knew all of them. I felt caught up in a cosmic wave of joy and fearlessness. And away we went. I had enough music in my head to cover the prelude, the offertory, communion and a postlude.

During the meet and greet, my friend Dee came over to me, and pressed, "What just happened here?" Completely mystified, I said I am not sure, but it does feel extraordinary, doesn't it?

Congregants welcomed me. The mother of six children told me she panned the congregation during my joyful prelude and sent it to her father in Salem. Shy little children approached me with solemnly extended hands. They wanted me to know who they were and that they liked my music. Pastor shook my hand again, murmuring, "Where did you say you came from?"

I sat back down at the piano and gently removed both my shoes from off my feet. Surely the Presence of the Lord was in this place.

Renee Lovejoy is a retired special education teacher who lives in Hermiston.

BRIEFLY

Boardman First Baptist Church hosts ladies lunch

BOARDMAN — A special ladies lunch is planned at the Boardman First Baptist Church.

The event features a taco feed Saturday at 3 p.m. at the church, 200 S.W. Willowfork Drive, Boardman. Those planning to attend are asked to bring a side dish or taco dressings.

For more information, call 541-481-9437.

Lenten services continue in Pendleton

PENDLETON — Special ecumenical worship services continue during the season of Lent in Pendleton.

The upcoming services and the officiant include:

- Wednesday, March 29 at 6 p.m. (soup supper) and 7 p.m. (service) at Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 241 S.E. Second St. (Marc Mullins).

- Wednesday, April 5 at 6 p.m. (soup supper) and 7 p.m. (service) at Peace Lutheran Church, 210 N.W. Ninth St. (Jim Pierce).

- Thursday, April 13 at 5 p.m. (Maundy Thursday communion) at First United Methodist Church, 352 S.E. Second St.

Everyone is invited, regardless of faith, to attend the soup supper and services. For more information, contact redeemerchurch1897@gmail.com.

College group presents creative worship

HERMISTON — A night of worship is planned as Momentum, the New Hope Christian College's touring team, visits Hermiston.

The Eugene-based group presents worship through music, dance, drama and technical arts. The free event is Monday, April 3 from 7-8:30 p.m. at Hermiston Church of the Nazarene, 1520 W. Orchard Ave.

For more information, contact 541-567-3677 or hermistonnaz@gmail.com. For more about the group, visit www.newhope.edu/creative_arts/ca-momentum.

Friday's faith page features local, national and international faith-related news. Send information about local faith-related news and events, including concerts, special speakers and activities to community@eastoregonian.com or drop off to the attention of Tammy Malgesini at 333 E. Main St., Hermiston or Renee Struthers at 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton. Call 541-564-4539 or 541-966-0818 with questions.

Worship Community

<p style="text-align: center;">Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 Nursery provided for all services Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 10:45 AM • 6:00 PM Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM "Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Redeemer Episcopal Church 241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809 www.pendletonepiscopal.org Sunday Holy Communion 9:00 a.m. Wednesday Holy Communion Noon Weekly Adults Spiritual Life Group All Are Welcome</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Salvation Army Center for Worship & Service Sunday Worship Service 9:30 - Sunday School 10:30 - Worship Service Wednesday Bible Study 5:30 Family Fellowship Meal • 6:00 Bible Study COME AS YOU ARE 150 SE EMIGRANT (541)276-3369</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org Sunday Worship 8:45 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided) Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information 541-289-4535 Tom Irich, Pastor Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA (First United Methodist Church) 191 E. Gladys Ave. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">St. Johns Episcopal Church Join Us On Our Journey With Jesus. Scripture, Tradition and Reason Family service 9am Sunday N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston Fr. Dan Ledard, Priest, PH: 567-4672 We are an all inclusive Church who welcomes all.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Seventh-Day Adventist Church Saturday Services Pendleton 1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882 Sabbath School 9:20 am Worship Service 10:45 am</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH in Mission for Christ LCMC Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Good Shepherd Lutheran Church LCMC Sunday worship at 11:00 AM 420 Locust St. • Boardman, OR 541-481-6132 Colin Brown, Pastor</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM 712 SW 27th ST. 541-276-1894 www.fcogpendleton.com</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Living Word Christian Center Sunday Worship 10:00am Wednesday Healing School 6:00pm Youth Classes: Nursery - 6th grade Sun & Wed Jr & Sr High Discipleship Program Wed Overcomer's Outreach Tuesday at 6:00pm - Annex A Christ-centered, 12-Step Recovery Support Group Pastor Sharon Miller 401 Northgate, Pendleton 541-278-8082 www.livingwordcc.com</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">First United Methodist Church Pendleton/Hermiston 352 SE 2nd Street, Pendleton Sunday Worship 9am 541-276-2616 Worship Broadcast on KUMA 1290 @ 11am 191 E. Gladys Ave, Hermiston Sunday Worship 11am 541-567-3002 Worship Livestream at herfumc.com Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Peace Lutheran Church 210 NW 9th, Pendleton ELCA Join us Sundays 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class ~Come and be at Peace~ on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ) 215 N Main • Pendleton, OR 97801 Behind These Stone Walls Beat the Hearts of Some of the Warmest Most Sincere, Most Caring People in Pendleton We Invite You to Come Get Acquainted! Sunday Worship: 10:40am Sunday School: 9:30am Office 276-5358 M-F, 8:30-12:30 www.fccpendleton.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">a place to belong Pendleton First INVITING ENRICHING INVOLVING EMPOWERING SUNDAY SERVICES AM Celebration-10:00am AM Kids Place -10:00am The Connection--6:00pm Groups for all ages: Adults, Children, Youth, & College Thursdays Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm Celebration Place-6:00pm Other Groups Available Weekly For more info visit WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM 1911 SE Court Ave 541-276-6417 Assembly of God Church</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH -Presbyterian Church (USA)- 201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton Service of Worship - 10:00 am Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am Fellowship - 11:00 am www.pendletonpresbyterian.com Open Hearted... Open Minded</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">PENDLETON LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH Sunday Service: 10am & 6pm Tuesday Kingdom Seekers: 7pm Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm We offer: Sunday School • Sign Language Interpreters • Nursery • Transportation • & more! Pastor Dan Satterwhite 541.377.4252 417 NW 21st St. • Pendleton, OR 97801 www.facebook.com/PendletonLighthouseChurch</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">Faith Center Church Worshipping God Loving People 108 S. Main • 276-9569 Sunday Worship 10:30 am Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady pendletonfaithcenter.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BAHA'I FAITH "The Unity of All Mankind" Pendleton Baha'i Center at 1015 SE Court Place Devotions Sundays @ 11:00am: Everyone invited! (541) 276-9360 visit us at www.pendletonbahais.org</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">To share your worship times call Terri Briggs 541-278-2678</p>	