



Department of Justice

Robert M. Duncan, Jr.
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Kentucky

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CONTACT: WM. ALLEN LOVE
PHONE: (859) 685-4805
E-MAIL: WILLIAM.ALLEN.LOVE@USDOJ.GOV

Nicholasville Men Sentenced for Social Media Threats Related to School Shooting Hoax

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Two Nicholasville, Ky., men were sentenced today for using social media to harass and intimidate an acquaintance, with threats of a prospective shooting at a Jessamine County school.

United States District Judge Danny C. Reeves sentenced 18-year-old Tristan H. Kelly to 21 months in federal prison and 19-year-old Cody T. Ritchey to 27 months in federal prison. Kelly and Ritchey each pled guilty, in June 2018, to one count of cyberstalking. Kelly and Ritchey both admitted that they had worked together to create a Snapchat profile on February 17, 2018, using the name and picture of a third person who did not know about their actions. Kelly and Ritchey then used the profile to publish a series of posts suggesting that this third individual would use firearms to attack a Jessamine County public school, in February 2018. Among other posts, Kelly and Ritchey made references to the shooting that had occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, only days earlier.

Kelly and Ritchey also admitted that they used this Snapchat profile to send direct messages to K.S., an acquaintance of the two. Among other messages, Kelly and Ritchey told K.S. “you’re the reason im killin everybody make it stop,” and “send nudes and ill let you live.” As part of their plea agreements, Kelly and Ritchey both admitted that they understood these messages could reasonably be expected to cause substantial emotional distress.

Law enforcement immediately investigated the threats, identified Kelly and Ritchey as the source, and determined that the threats were a hoax.

“The defendants’ conduct was extremely serious, as reflected in the sentences imposed today by the Court,” said Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky. “I commend the efforts of, and cooperation between, the local and federal law enforcement officers involved in the investigation. The defendants’ callous and alarming conduct, coming only days after the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, needlessly put people in fear of a similar tragedy and expended precious law enforcement resources. Deterring this type conduct is critical and we will continue to make that a priority for our Office.”

Under federal law, Kelly and Ritchey must each serve 85 percent of their prison sentences. Upon their release, they will each be under the supervision of the United States Probation Office for three years.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Amy Hess, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Todd Justice, Chief of the Nicholasville Police Department, jointly announced the indictment. The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by the Nicholasville Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Boone.

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