

Lackawanna Trail student arrested for gun threat

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Posted Mar 12, 2018 at 10:26 PM Updated Mar 12, 2018 at 10:26 PM

State police charged a Lackawanna Trail High School senior with pointing an air-powered handgun Saturday at a Factoryville community center in what they say is his latest in a series of violent threats.

Police charged Brian M. Peterson, 18, of Nicholson, after tracking him down at a friend’s home within 90 minutes. They are also investigating reports that he asked others how he could obtain an AR-15 rifle.

Peterson remains behind bars in the Wyoming County Correctional Facility, unable to post $100,000 bail.

A tip by a fellow Trail student who saw Peterson point the gun at the Keystone Community Center led to the arrest. The student, whose name remains undisclosed, called police just after the noon incident shortly because she “knew of Peterson and past threats he made implying school violence,” according to an arrest affidavit.

“She did a very brave thing,” said Cpl. Joseph Mitchell, the lead investigator.

Mitchell charged Peterson with risking a catastrophe, simple assault, making terroristic threats, recklessly endangering another person and disorderly conduct.

The student who tipped off police said she spotted Peters riding a bicycle as she and a friend walked to their car on College Avenue. As they drove up College Avenue toward the Keystone College gymnasium, she saw Peterson stop riding, dismount, take off a Spiderman mask, pull a black handgun from a holster on his pants and point the gun. He also wore a dark, hooded sweatshirt and blue jeans. She told police of the “ongoing issues he has had concerning him threatening school violence.” The Keystone Community Center is near the Keystone College campus, but Factoryville operates it, Mitchell said in an interview.

With his family’s help, police found Peterson at friend’s home in the Tall Timbers mobile home park in Factoryville. When they took Peterson into custody, he had an air pistol, a holster and the Spiderman mask. Peterson, who waived his rights to a lawyer, provided a written statement that said he rode through the college campus on his way to a friend’s house to shoot targets in the woods.

On his way, the gun fell to the ground and fired a BB, he wrote, according to the arrest affidavit. At the friend’s home, he painted the gun white “so it would not look like a real gun,” he wrote.

In the affidavit, Mitchell wrote that “Peterson has been involved in various incidents involving violence, which includes threats of school violence and his interest of purchasing firearms.” That includes asking around about obtaining an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle, the kind used in the Parkland, Florida school attack that killed 17 students and school staff.

“These incidents were either handled internally by various agencies or investigated by law enforcement,” Mitchell wrote.

Peterson was never charged because the information police received was considered hearsay or confidential, he wrote.

Lackawanna Trail superintendent Matthew Rakauskas confirmed Peterson is a senior at the high school, but declined to comment on past threats or other discipline. He said the district is “fully cooperating” with the police investigation.

“With this incident or any incident involving threats of violence school safety is our first priority,” Rakauskas said.