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Breakthrough in JCC bomb threat case said to come after Trump sent FBI to Israel

Investigation has been ongoing for 2 years but police only tracked him down after team of 12 feds arrived

BY JACOB MAGID | March 26, 2017, 10:39 am

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An American-Israeli Jewish teenager, accused of making dozens of anti-Semitic bomb threats in the United States and elsewhere, is escorted by police as he leaves a courtroom in Rishon LeZion on March 23, 2017. (AFP/Jack Guez)

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Israeli police only managed to zero in on the Jewish Israeli-American teen suspected of calling in the JCC bomb threats after US President Donald Trump sent over a team of 12 FBI agents to Israel in recent weeks, the Haaretz daily reported.

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Although the investigation has been ongoing for the past two years, the breakthrough that led to the Thursday arrests of the teen and his father was only reached after FBI investigators arrived in Israel several weeks ago, Haaretz said, citing police sources.

Trump's intervention is significant as he had been heavily criticized for not doing enough to end the threats to Jewish centers and for not

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emphatically
condemning anti-
Semitsm.

The report did not
specify what the FBI
agents managed to
do that their local counterparts could not.

The suspect, whose name is currently banned from publication in Israel, is refusing to talk to authorities and police have still not managed to access his computers.

However, police revealed details of his modus operandi.

The youth had apparently been making bomb threat for over two years, but the urgency in apprehending him increased following a spate of threats to Jewish community centers in the US.

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JONATHAN GREENBLATT

Police sources told Haaretz that this was in part because the suspect would monitor media reports after he would call in a threat to gauge the scale of its impact. If he noticed that it was receiving considerable media attention, he would continue making threats in that same location.



The father of American-Israeli Jewish teenager, accused of making dozens of anti-Semitic bomb threats in the United States and elsewhere, sits in court in Rishon LeZion on March 23, 2017. (AFP/JACK GUEZ)

Several of the JCCs and Jewish organizations received multiple threats. However, police believe that the number of bomb threats he phoned in was much greater than was known to the public as many were not made public.

Police are still struggling to uncover exactly what or how he did as he is not cooperating with police, citing a medical condition.

His lawyer, Galit Besh, said her client had a "very serious medical condition" that may have affected his behavior. She added that the condition had prevented him from attending elementary school, high school and enlisting in the army.

"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 in light of his medical situation."

Channel 10 said the condition was a nonmalignant brain tumor. Police are currently waiting for the child's mother to retrieve the proper medical documentation proving his condition.

They have also failed to break into his computers and they say that he had no social media footprint under any name they know.

He reportedly grew careless and failed on at least one occasion to route his internet connection through a proxy, leaving behind a real IP address traced back to Israel.

Police are also working to gather information from the teen's father, who remains in custody on suspicion that he knew what his son was doing. A computer expert himself, he was likely to have recognized the high-level equipment in his son's room, yet did not report the matter to authorities.



American-Israeli Jewish teenager, center, accused of making dozens of anti-Semitic bomb threats in the United States and elsewhere, is escorted by guards as he leaves the Israeli court in Rishon LeZion on March 23, 2017. (AFP/JACK GUEZ)

The suspect's mother is also expected to be interrogated in the coming days.

Israel authorities are also preparing for the possibility that the US will ask for the suspect's extradition. While such a request has not yet been made, it is believed that Israel would likely comply.

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There is also the possibility that commercial companies damaged by the suspect's bomb threats may file civil lawsuits against him.



People evacuated because of a bomb threat return to the David Posnack Jewish Community Center and David Posnack Jewish Day School on Monday, Feb. 27, 2017, in Davie, Fla. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

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