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PRESS RELEASE

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PSU-HARRISBURG STUDENT SENTENCED AFTER MAKING THREATS ON MYSPACE

Martin C. Carlson, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, announced today that Steven A. Voneida, age 24, of Lower Paxton Township, Pennsylvania, was sentenced by United States District Judge Sylvia H. Rambo, for transmitting communication containing a threat to injure. Voneida was sentenced to 33 months imprisonment. With credit for time-served, Voneida will serve an additional 19 months in prison. On February 1, 2008, Voneida was found guilty following a jury trial.

According to U.S. Attorney Carlson, in the early morning hours of April 18, 2007, two days after the shootings at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Vonieda posted a photographic illustration on his personal MySpace page centered upon the Virginia Tech shooter accompanied by a poem paying tribute to the Virginia Tech shooter, entitled “the Ballad of Cho Seung-hui.” This posting appeared under the heading, “Virginia Tech Massacre: They got what they deserved.” In addition to these postings, Voneida, a Pennsylvania State University-Harrisburg student, also threatened that “Someday I will make the Virginia Tech incident look like a trip to an amusement park.”

The week following the Virginia Tech killings, an Indiana University of Pennsylvania student visiting MySpace.com found these postings and contacted University Police. University Police in turn contacted the FBI, who with the assistance of the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Lower Paxton Police initiated an investigation.

“The first obligation of law enforcement is to protect. Our schools must be a place of safety and learning. Today’s sentencing is a testament to an outstanding partnership of local and federal law enforcement agencies who have worked together to protect the college community,” said Martin C. Carlson, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

"This investigation shows that the FBI, in concert with its law enforcement partners such as the Pennsylvania State Police and the Lower Paxton Police Department, considers threats made on the internet as serious matters that will be vigorously investigated. The prompt and coordinated response in this matter prevented what may have become yet another tragic incident involving violence in our schools," said Janice K. Fedarcyk, Special Agent in Charge of the Philadelphia Division of the FBI.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Pennsylvania State Police and the Lower Paxton Police Department. In addition, Pennsylvania State University Police Services and Pennsylvania State University Administration provided critical support.

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