

Official: Bomb threats at McKinley County Courthouse were false alarms

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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505 phone number under investigation

With two bomb threats in the past few weeks, the McKinley County Sheriff's Office dropped a proverbial bomb of its own Aug. 23, putting the word out that pranks and empty threats will absolutely not be tolerated.

"This is a serious matter," MCSO Lt. Pat Salazar said in a news briefing this week on bomb threats. "It's not something that anybody should be doing. It is a crime."

Salazar said sheriff's deputies responded to a threat Aug. 22 at the McKinley County Courthouse at 207 W. Hill Ave. He said deputies canvassed a wide area around the building and then some, and found nothing.

"We have reason to believe that this is the work of pranksters," Salazar said. "This is something that is very disturbing to everyone."

Salazar said whoever called in one of the bomb threats did so not knowing the Sheriff's Office has caller ID. The number from which at least one threat was made came from a 505 number, according to Salazar, who believes the caller resides in Gallup or the surrounding area.

"As we speak, we are pursuing the background on this number and everybody and everything connected to it," he said. "The call came from a pre-paid phone. That's what we believe, but we are pursuing all angles."

McKinley County Attorney Doug Decker said the most recent bomb threat came into District Court on Aug. 22. He said the entire McKinley County Courthouse was evacuated, as it was for a previous bomb threat, early in the morning for about one hour.

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“Nothing was found,” Decker said. “Both scenarios required evacuations.”

Making a bomb threat is a fourth degree felony that is punishable by more than a year in jail. Salazar said he doesn't rule out a scenario wherein someone is attempting to create a distraction by disrupting the county routine.

“Is it somebody who doesn't want to go to court?” Salazar mused. “I don't know. But we will catch this person. That, I can guarantee.”

Decker said there have been four McKinley County Courthouse-related bomb threats called in within the past two to three months.

“They are all being investigated,” he said.

***By Bernie Dotson
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