

California man arrested, charged with making threats against LGBTQ Communities in Massachusetts

“Defendant allegedly targeted Springfield-based Merriam-Webster, Inc. and other institutions and individuals with threats to commit anti-LGBTQ violence.

A California man was arrested on Tuesday, April 20, 2022 and charged in federal court in Springfield, Mass. in connection with making threats against Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Jeremy David Hanson, 34, of Rossmoor, Calif., was charged by criminal complaint with one count of interstate communication of threats to commit violence. Hanson was released on conditions following an initial appearance in federal court in the Central District of California. Hanson will appear before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Katherine A. Robertson in federal court in Springfield on April 29, 2022.

“Hate-filled threats and intimidations have no place in our society,” said United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins. “We believe Hanson sent a multitude of anonymous threatening and despicable messages related to the LGBTQ community that were intended to evoke fear and division. My office and our law enforcement partners will not tolerate threats against members of our communities, no matter what corner of the internet they’re sent from. Perpetrators will be identified, arrested, and held accountable in federal court.”

“Jeremy Hanson is accused of making hate-fueled threats of violence that crossed a line,” said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division. “Everyone has a right to express their opinion, but repeatedly

threatening to kill people, as has been alleged, takes it to a new level. We are always going to pursue individuals who try to intimidate and isolate members of our community by inciting violent, hateful acts. Threats to life are most certainly not protected speech and they cause real fear in victims. Rest assured, the FBI will do everything we can to bring to justice anyone who commits these criminal acts.”

According to the criminal complaint, between Oct. 2 and Oct. 8, 2021, Springfield-based Merriam-Webster, Inc. received various threatening messages and comments demonstrating bias against specific gender identities submitted through its website’s “Contact Us” page and in the comments section on its webpages that corresponded to the word entries for “Girl” and “Woman.” Authorities later identified the user as Hanson. As a result of the threats, Merriam-Webster closed its offices in Springfield and New York City for approximately five business days.

Specifically, it is alleged that on Oct. 2, 2021, Hanson used the handle “@anonYmous” to post the following comment on the dictionary’s website definition of “female”: “It is absolutely sickening that Merriam-Webster now tells blatant lies and promotes anti-science propaganda. There is no such thing as ‘gender identity.’ The imbecile who wrote this entry should be hunted down and shot.”

Hanson also allegedly sent the following threatening message via the website’s “Contact Us” page: “You [sic] headquarters should be shot up and bombed. It is sickening that you have caved to the cultural Marxist, anti-science tranny [sic] agenda and altered the definition of ‘female’ as part of the Left’s efforts to corrupt and degrade the English language and deny reality. You evil Marxists should all be killed. It would be poetic justice to have someone storm your offices and shoot up the place, leaving none of you commies alive.”

It is further alleged that on Oct. 8, 2021, Hanson posted

another threatening comment on the dictionary's website and a threatening message via the "Contact Us" page that threatened to "bomb your offices for lying and creating fake...".

The investigation identified numerous related threats, including to the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Land O' Lakes, Hasbro, Inc., IGN Entertainment, the President of the University of North Texas, two professors at Loyola Marymount University and a New York City rabbi.

Individuals or entities who believe they may be victims of this crime should contact the U.S. Attorney's Office at (888) 221-6023.

The charge of interstate transmission of communications to injure the person of another provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

U.S. Attorney Rollins and FBI SAC Bonavolonta made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven H. Breslow of Rollins' Springfield Branch Office is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. "-Massachusetts Department of Justice.