At Least 25 Jewish Institutions Across US Targeted in Second Wave of Bomb Threats

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<http://www.jta.org/2017/01/18/news-opinion/united-states/18-jewish-institutions-across-us-targeted-in-second-wave-of-bomb-threats>

At least 25 Jewish institutions across the United States have received bomb threats, Jewish security officials said, in the second wave of such mass disruption in two weeks.

Paul Goldenberg, the director of Secure Community Networks — an affiliate of the Jewish federations of North America, which advises Jewish groups and institutions on security — said there were bomb threats called in Wednesday to Jewish community centers, schools and other institutions in Miami; Edison, New Jersey; Cincinnati; Alabama, and on the West Coast.

News reports also cited threats in Albany, New York; Nashville; suburban Boston and Detroit; West Hartford, Connecticut, and the Orlando area.

Additional threats were being reported early Wednesday afternoon.

Whether the institutions, which include schools and community centers, evacuated depended on the practices of local law enforcement, Goldenberg said.

“It’s the second salvo in 10 days, we’re asking people to ensure they stay in contact with local law enforcement,” he said.

Bomb threats were [called](http://www.jta.org/2017/01/09/news-opinion/united-states/across-the-us-16-jccs-get-bomb-threats-in-a-single-day) into 16 institutions across the Northeast and South on Jan. 9, and hundreds of people were evacuated. All the alerts were false.

In many cases Wednesday the callers were live, Goldenberg said, as opposed to the previous threat, when calls were recorded.

Operations at the Gordon JCC in Nashville returned to normal approximately an hour after a receptionist received a call stating that there was a bomb in the building, said Mark Freedman, executive director at the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee. The was delivered in a woman’s voice, but it was unclear whether the call was live or recorded, he told JTA.

Freedman said the community, which was targeted in last week’s series of threats, would not be intimidated by the incidents, which he termed “telephone terrorism.”

“[T]hese people, whoever they are, that are making these threats are trying to intimidate, create anxiety and fear, and we are going to do what we have to do to ensure the safety and security of our valued members and constituents, but we are not going to give in to what they are trying to create, which is to drive us away from our valued institutions,” he said.

Freedman added: “Clearly it’s a pattern of intimidation, and it’s likely to continue in the current atmosphere that we have in this country, where hate groups feel that they can come after good-standing members of the community.”

This round of bomb threats is the latest incident in a recent wave of increased anti-Semitism in the U.S. The Anti-Defamation League documented rising anti-Semitic abuse on Twitter last year, as well as a spike in hate crimes following the presidential election. Elise Jarvis, associate director for communal security at the ADL, said she anticipates more incidents like this in the future.

“These things often come in cycles,” she told JTA Wednesday. “All these things, when you bring them together, it paints an intense picture.”

Jarvis said institutions need more training in how to deal with bomb threats, including which questions to ask the caller — where the bomb is, for example — and how to handle other threats like suspicious mail. If staff are aware of security procedures, she said, being prepared doesn’t have to be costly.

“We need to be providing a lot more training, specifically on how to respond to bomb threats,” Jarvis said. “The longer you can keep someone on the phone, the better.”

Secure Community Networks held a conference call later the same week with top FBI and Homeland Security officials for over a thousand callers from Jewish groups across the country.