

X

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MORRIS POLICE DEPARTMENT

## INCIDENT REPORT

<b>ICR#</b> 14000376	<b>AGENCY ORI#</b> MN0750600	<b>JUVENILE:</b>
<b>INCIDENT</b>	<b>Reported:</b> 01-28-2014 1200 <b>Committed Start: Committed End:</b> <b>Title:</b> Criminal Damage To Property <b>Short Description:</b> Approximately 100 NorthStar newspapers were written on in their New Life Edition. There had been copies that had been altered and now said New "Strife" Edition. <b>Location(s)</b> SCIENCE <b>Address:</b> 102 Cougar Cir NE Entrance <b>City:</b> Morris <b>State:</b> MN <b>Zip:</b> 56267 <b>Country:</b> USA	
<b>OFFICERS</b>	<b>Officer Assigned:</b> Lund, Jennifer <b>Badge No:</b> 2076 <b>Primary:</b> Yes <b>Officer Assigned:</b> White, Karon <b>Badge No:</b> 331 <b>Primary:</b> No <b>Officer Assigned:</b> Velde, Rob <b>Badge No:</b> 2048 <b>Primary:</b> No	
<b>MOC</b>	<b>MOC:</b> P0129 <b>Literal:</b> PROP DAMAGE-UNK LVL-PUBLIC-OTHER INTENT <b>Statute:</b> 609-595 <b>UCR:</b> 14	
<b>NAMES</b>	<b>Involvement:</b> Reported By <b>Name:</b> Geiger, Johnathan Michael <b>Age:</b> 20 <b>Sex:</b> <b>Race:</b> <b>Height:</b> 602 <b>Weight:</b> 165 <hr/> <b>Involvement:</b> MENTIONED IN REPORT <b>Name:</b> Myers, Paul Zachary <b>Age:</b> 56 <b>Sex:</b> <b>Race:</b> <b>Height:</b> 511 <b>Weight:</b> 200	

### Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 04-17-2014 1346

Title: Lieutenant Lund Report

Created By: Jennifer Lund

On January 28, 2014 at approximately 1200 hours, John Geiger reported that 100 copies of the NorthStar newspaper were written on. He explained that the papers were distributed on January 27, 2014 between 1700 and 1800 hours. All of the papers in the Science building North East entrance were damage. Geiger showed me one paper. On the bottom of the page the "Gift of Life Edition" is printed. Str is handwritten over the top of the L in Life to make it appear to say Strife. He stated that the top 3 or 4 in the Student Center Tunnel were written on. Community Service Officer Wasiloski told Geiger that she noted the papers were also damaged that were in the HFA building on the chairs on the lower level north end. She saw the papers when she unlocked the building.

I asked Geiger if he suspected anyone in particular. Geiger told me he thought it might be Professor Paul Myers. It should be noted that I spoke with Geiger the previous week and he did not have any leads to who had removed the papers from the magazine racks prior to November 25. We also discussed putting up a camera in front of his office or on one of the magazine racks. He told me he wanted a locked office space but would think about the cameras.

I had no knowledge of the accusations of Myers by Geiger and Geiger did not tell me this when we met on January 21, 2014 at approximately 1530 hours.

I asked Geiger why he thought Myers had damaged the papers. He had me look at the computer and bring up Paul Myers blog entitled Pharyngula @ <http://freethoughtblogs.com/pharyngula/>. I noticed Myers had written on

January 15 and on January 23 about Geiger accusing him of taking the papers. I asked Geiger why he didn't give me this information last week. Geiger did not answer. After Geiger left the office, I noted that in newest edition of the NorthStar paper he accused the Campus Police of damaging or losing video surveillance. I called Geiger and asked him why he printed that when he knows that the video surveillance camera was not in range of the magazine rack. Geiger told me it was a misunderstanding.

On January 29, 2014 I went to the Northeast entrance of the Science building and found the damaged papers. I called Geiger wondering about the handwriting on the rest of the papers. He told me he compared them and they all look the same. I told him we should compare some of the handwriting if he is reporting criminal damage to property. He told me he was in Alexandria, MN at the time but it was fine for me to take some of the copies and he would pick them up if he needed them. I went to Student Activities to talk to Director Dave Israels Swenson. A student worker picked up 19 copies of the damaged NorthStar paper and delivered them to my office. I spoke to Geiger a couple of times after the call. He told me I could take all the papers to check the writing. I told him he could drop them off to me. He did not show up in my office so I asked Community Service Officers White to check the magazine racks for damaged papers and note how many she finds and photograph them. The list is attached.

#### Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 04-17-2014 1359

Title: Officer Velde Report

Created By: Sandy Kopel

On January 28, 2014 when I checked on for the beginning of my shift I was informed by University of Minnesota Morris Police Lieutenant Jen Lund that she had taken a complaint from Johnathan Michael Geiger, DOB-10/31/93, regarding a large number of his newspaper, The NorthStar, that had been vandalized. Lieutenant Lund then provided me with a copy of the paper in which I noted that someone had written over an L in the word Life on the cover with a blue marker the letters str. Lieutenant Lund went on to tell me that Geiger had informed her that a large number of the papers that he had just put out had the same type of vandalism and he suspected a faculty member, Paul Zachary Myers, DOB-3/9/57, of the vandalism and also of the theft of a large number of the last printing of his paper. Lieutenant Lund then asked if I could interview Myers regarding the accusation and also provided me with a blog post written by Myers in which he criticizes The NorthStar and its validity as a newspaper. It was also reported in the blog post that the staff of The NorthStar had contacted a law firm to investigate Myers and the University and their involvement in the thefts and vandalism.

A short time after I had finished shift change with Lieutenant Lund I contacted Myers on his office phone and asked if he would come to the Campus Police office and speak to me regarding the issues with the newspaper. Myers said that he would come and speak to me in order to put the issue to rest and also added that he really didn't know why he was being brought into the whole mess. A little bit later I was met at the Campus Police office by Myers.

When Myers arrived I gave him a short background into why I had called him in and also advised him that since he was being accused in some sense of committing a crime I would have to read him his Miranda Warning before we began. I then read the Miranda Warning to Myers, after which he informed me that he understood the warning and agreed to speak with me. Myers also informed me that he wished to keep the questions very brief as he just wanted to put on record that he did not do what he was supposedly accused of. Myers then informed me that he had nothing to do with the thefts of the papers back in November and had actually not found out about the incident until approximately a month after it had happened. I then asked Myers if he had anything to do with the defacing of the current edition of The NorthStar. Myers then asked me what I was referring to and I showed him the front of one of the defaced papers and he then told me that he did not even know that anything like that had happened. Myers again said that he had nothing to do with the incidents and would not perform such acts against students no matter what nonsense they printed in their paper. I also asked Myers numerous questions about any type of past relationship between him and the members of the paper's staff. Myers was unable to think of any correlation

between him and anyone on its staff. Myers said that to his knowledge he has not ever had any of them in a class nor does he even know if he's met them and thus could not imagine why he would singled out as a possible culprit. Myers did inform me that on top of the newspaper staff accusing him of this, they have been taking copies of each issue and sliding them under his office door. Myers asked if this was common practice with all professors and I informed him that I had no direct knowledge of anything like that. Myers did think that they were trying to harass him due to his past outspoken nature in his blog post and other beliefs that he held that were contrary to their apparent thought process. This ends the summary of Myers' statement.

Prior to Myers leaving I did ask him to submit a handwriting sample that we could possibly have to compare to the writing that was on the defaced newspapers. Myers informed me that he would provide the sample as it would help to rule him out once and for all. I asked Myers to write a word in marker on a blank sheet of paper that had the same letter combination in it that was on the front of the papers. Myers then wrote the word string on the paper in red marker. I did note that the STR from Myers was similar, but not exact to the STR written on the front of the paper that I had a copy of. It will be determined at a later date whether or not the writing sample and the defaced newspaper will be sent in to the BCA lab for a certified analysis.

#### Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 04-17-2014 1356

Title: Officer Velde/Geiger Interview

Created By: Sandy Kopel

On January 30, 2014 I met with Johnathan Michael Geiger, DOB-10/31/93 at the Campus Police office to take a statement regarding a string of recent complaints he had reported regarding the theft and vandalism that had been done to copies of The NorthStar newspaper and its office. I also noted that Geiger had also written letters to the Chancellor of the University of Minnesota, Morris and also had articles in recent issues of The NorthStar describing a supposed lack of concern shown by the University and Campus Police.

During the statement that Geiger provided he informed me that in end of November he had reported that a number of The NorthStar papers had been stolen shortly after they had been placed out for distribution on racks around campus. Geiger informed me that this had been reported to Campus Police but there were no suspects nor was there any security camera footage of the area that the papers were taken from. Geiger then informed me that at some point in time in the weeks following that incident their area in the Student Activities office in the Student Center had been vandalized. Geiger also reported this incident but the damage was not very bad as what was used to mark on the door was washed out with little effort and no permanent damage had occurred. Geiger then informed me that earlier in the current week after they had distributed the current issue of the paper, someone had defaced the papers by writing over the headline with the letters STR changing the word life to strife. Geiger also had reported this event to Campus Police which prompted this latest round of investigations. Geiger also informed me that he had recently reported the identity of a possible suspect, Paul Zachary Myers, DOB-3/9/57. Geiger informed me that he had begun to suspect Myers in the first or second week of December when he had read a blog post written by Myers that had less than spectacular things to say about The NorthStar. Geiger also reported that Myers had written at the end of blog something to the effect that all of the papers should be thrown out and disappear. That was the entire timeline of events that had been reported to Campus Police.

I then asked Geiger about the letter that he had written to the University Chancellor and others as well as the newspaper article depicting the ineptitude of the Campus Police and our investigation. Geiger informed me that he had probably gone too far in the letter and agreed that based on their newspaper's polarizing content they had a pretty large suspect list which was indeed hard to whittle down with no evidence. I also pointed out to Geiger that I had brought in Myers, a fact that could be read about in the current edition of Myers' blog post, and questioned him regarding Geiger's accusation. I asked Geiger why he had not mentioned Myers earlier as a suspect when he was

asked specifically if he knew of anyone who might be involved. Geiger said that he did not want to just accuse a professor of something like this as he needed more than just a simple suspicion. Geiger said that he suspected Myers since a large number of the incidents happened in the Science building and Myers had an office there and access to the building after hours. I then informed Geiger that since the Science building is the last one to be locked at night, there are a lot of people with access to the building late into the evening. Geiger also informed me that the writing on the vandalism looked neat and that of either a female or someone who writes a great deal and he assumed that since Myers is a professor that he writes quite a bit. I did inform Geiger that we had obtained a handwriting sample from Myers and would be comparing it at a later date if need be. I also informed Geiger that a court worthy comparison would have to be done at the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the results would take months at the earliest to receive. I also inquired about the vandalism that had been done to the door of The NorthStar office area. Geiger said that he did not worry about it that much as there was no damage and he did not think that anyone would be able to be caught. I then explained that there were a small number of people that would have had access to their office area at night, so I was curious if he had any other suspects that worked in the general area with access that may have done it. Geiger informed me that he did not think anyone in the Student Activities would have done the damage so he had no direction that he could lead us in from that standpoint. I then did reiterate to Geiger that we had contacted the Central Security office in November when the papers were stolen and were informed that there was no footage of anyone taking the papers as the rack was not in camera view. Geiger said that he was aware and wanted to work with us in the future to ensure that the rack was in a location where either the security cameras or a placed surveillance camera could monitor the newspaper rack.

I then asked Geiger if he had any other people we should be looking at and he reported one other person who had a picture they had taken in one of their first editions that was used without their consent. Geiger informed me that he did not believe that person had done anything as they had worked with him to rectify the problem. I then continued to talk to Geiger about the large number of people who quite possibly were upset of the newspaper's content and he did inform me that they put items in the paper that were inflammatory so they could generate attention, however he did not think it was appropriate what was being done to him and his staff. I then did indicate that since there were so many people who have a desire to stop him from printing his papers that it could be multiple people involved and I also suggested that someone from the paper's staff could also be guilty since these types of events generated publicity as well. Geiger did not disagree with the possibility of a staff member, however he did not think that there was anyone who would have done it.

I then asked Geiger about his requests for more office space and a place of their own to work. Geiger informed me that the letter he had written in response to the supposed ineptitude of Campus Police was a follow up to requests he had made in the past. Geiger informed me that he was not so much speaking out against the police, despite that being the main theme that was written about, but he was more upset about Chancellor Johnson's response to them. Geiger informed me that Chancellor Johnson had issued an email to all of campus condemning the content of The NorthStar, but had not once spoken about the theft or defacing of the papers. Geiger felt that, despite the requirement to be neutral, Chancellor Johnson was biased toward him and the newspaper which also bled into their requests for more space falling on deaf ears. I informed Geiger that while I had not direct knowledge of open space on campus nor the ability to rectify this issue, most of the problem came down to money and the inability to design and construct new areas for everyone that wanted it. Geiger also said that he did not feel the university needed to spend money on things like upgrading the WiFi around campus while they were looking for space. I then informed him that was something that the university obviously had to prioritize and it probably was nothing personal.

The last bit of Geiger's statement centered on the determination that if he wished us to perform an effective investigation with any possibility of determining who the culprit(s) were; he needed to work with us. I indicated then that when we ask if he had any suspects he needed to share names with us as he has more of an idea who those people are than we do. I also indicated that if we offer to put a camera in to monitor their office area of the racks with newspapers in them, he and his staff need to work with us to do this. I told him that we do not know their distribution schedule so we are not just going to randomly put cameras around in areas. Geiger had mentioned earlier that they did not wish to have a camera in their office when they were working as they didn't want to be spied on. I informed Geiger that cameras can be turned off and just because it's there doesn't mean we are spying on them. I advised Geiger that these are all ways in which we had offered to help them in the past and they have not been forthcoming in that regard, despite letters and newspaper articles to the contrary. Geiger did agree to be more helpful and to work with Campus Police on a more positive note in the future in order to have a greater chance of ending with a successful investigation. This concludes the statement given by Geiger.

Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 04-17-2014 1358

Title: Officer Velde/02-06-14 Report

Created By: Sandy Kopel

On Thursday, February 6, 2014 I was given a message from University of Minnesota, Morris Campus Police Lieutenant Jen Lund that she had been contacted by Johnathan Michael Geiger, DOB-10/31/93, regarding a complaint he had filed in November about some copies of his newspaper, The North Star, being stolen. Lt. Lund informed me that Geiger had received a post on the papers Facebook page that accused the staff of The North Star of not paying their bill and thus the papers had essentially been reposed. Lt. Lund also told me that the individual who had apparently left the post had identified himself as Robert Westbrook. Geiger then reported that the paper was current on their bill and that he believed Westbrook was a regular blogger on a site maintained by Paul Zachary Myers, DOB-3/9/57, a reported suspect in the original theft. Lt. Lund asked if I could follow up on the information.

On February 11, 2014 I performed an internet search into the name of Robert Westbrook. I received a couple of possible results for an individual that was originally from Austin, MN but was currently a professor of history at the University of Rochester in New York. Based on his Minnesota connection he could have possibly been the one who left the message. I also located a Robert Westbrook from Nova Scotia, Canada who had connections to Myers and his blog as well. Based on the geographical locations of where each of these people resided, it was determined that they could not have committed the thefts and whichever one it was; they were probably messing with Geiger and the other staff.

After I completed the internet search I contacted Geiger on his cell phone and asked him about the information he had provided to Lt. Lund. Geiger informed me that he had meant to get back to Campus Police like he had originally told Lt. Lund he would but he had been busy and thus could not. Geiger did inform me that he had also performed a search on Robert Westbrook and came up with similar results and also agreed that it was most likely a prank since based on where they lived they could not be committing the thefts or other vandalism. Geiger informed me that the paper was current on its bills and also reported that the posting did not reference the actual print company they used which also made him suspicious of the validity of the post. Geiger informed me that he had deleted the post and had also sent a private message to the author asking for a phone number so they could discuss his concerns but had yet to receive a response. Geiger informed me that he had pretty much written off this latest event as being anything usable, but just wanted us to be aware that his prior suspicions of Myers being involved might be true if bloggers on his site were personally messaging them now. I again informed Geiger that we would continue with what we were doing then and asked that he call us if anything else arose in the future.

Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 04-17-2014 1205

Title: CSO White Report

Created By: Sandy Kopel

During patrol tonight (01-29-14) at the request of Lt. Lund, I monitored for additional copies of The NorthStar – New Life Edition. It had been brought to Lt. Lund's attention that there had been copies that had been altered and now said New "Strife" Edition. During my patrol I observed the following copies on campus

- 1) There were five unaltered copies on the table as you entered the front doors of Camden hall on your right hand side.
- 2) In the entrance of the Science Building to the left in the newspaper stand there were 43 copies, 42 of which had been altered and one unaltered copy.
- 3) In the entrance of the library there were 16 unaltered copies.
- 4) On a coffee table next to Higbys in the Student Center there were 2 unaltered copies.

- 5) In the newspaper stand outside of Oyate Hall there were 40 unaltered copies.
- 6) There were 3 altered copies lying on the tables across from the mail room.

I did not observe any other copies during my routine patrol. Nor was I contacted by any staff from The North Star regarding any additional altered copies. All copies remain in the locations noted above. Karon White, #331

#### Supplemental Report

ICR: 14000376

Last Modified: 01-12-2015 1020

Title: Officer Velde Follow-up

Created By: Sandy Kopel

On February 20, 2014 I contacted the handwriting analysis lab at the Minnesota Bureau of Apprehension to inquire as to the process of submitting samples to be analyzed. I spoke with the forensic scientist who does the certified comparisons and explained that our department had received a complaint of a large number of newspapers had been vandalized on campus and we were interested in comparing a sample of writing provided by a possible suspect to the actual vandalism. I was informed by the BCA technician that due to the current backlog in comparisons that currently existed in their office and the fact that they were the only comparison analyst on staff for the foreseeable future they were only taking on cases that resulted in losses of many thousands of dollars or loss of life. The technician did give me the contact information for some private labs that would be able to accommodate our request but I was also informed that the comparison would cost quite a bit of money if one of those labs did the work. This concluded my conversation with the BCA technician.

A few days after speaking with the BCA and Lt. Lund about the investigation I spoke with Stevens County Attorney Aaron Jordan and apprised him of what we had learned thus far. Jordan informed me that based on what I had told him no charges were able to be filed as yet due to lack of suitable evidence and also that he did not advise sending in and paying for the handwriting analysis due to no other evidence being present that incriminated the suspect to the level that we could possibly charge them.

After finding out this information I did relay my findings to Lieutenant Lund and was informed that due to the cost associated with the handwriting analysis and the fact that no other evidence currently supported the possible suspect other than speculation, Campus Police would not be sending the samples into the private labs to be analyzed. I did take both a copy of a vandalized newspaper and the writing sample provided by the suspect and will maintain them in my evidence storage in case other information arises or the decision is made to send them in at a later date.