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DA drops conspiracy charges in McClatchy High case

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Sacramento District Attorney Jan Scully dismissed conspiracy charges against two of four suspects in what police had described as a "revenge shooting" planned at McClatchy High School on April 26.

There is "insufficient evidence to support the conspiracy charges," Deputy District Attorney Natalia Luna told Juvenile Court Judge Jane Ure.

Defense lawyers for the two released suspects -- a boy and a girl, both 14 -- said their clients had been wrongly accused -- and that there was never any plot by the four teens to go after other female students who had fought with her earlier in the school year.

Defense lawyers said the girl told that to police many times, and only told them there was such a plan after hours of aggressive, profanity-laced interrogation by two male detectives that reduced her to tears. The lawyers said the teen was in custody for eight hours during questioning.

Luna said that the way the teen changed her story during the interrogation "cast substantial doubt" on her statements. "We believe no conspiracy can be proved," Luna said.

Sacramento police defended what they described as an "aggressive investigation."

"We were aggressive and we would do it again today," said Capt. Daniel Hahn, adding the department's interrogation tactics were "legal and justified."

The incident began when police found a 15-year-old boy with a gun at a Regional Transit station near the high school. They found photos of a McClatchy student on a 14-year-old boy, and the school resource officer reached the conclusion that the boys were en route to the school to target students.

Defense lawyers said the so-called target actually was a girl that the boy had a crush on and was carrying her picture. They said he did not intend to harm her. Prosecutor Luna concurred, saying "he possessed the photos for an innocent purpose."

After conspiracy charges against the boy and girl were dropped, they left the courthouse with their families.

Two other suspects remain in custody: a boy, 15, who had the gun at the RT station, and a boy, 13, who had provided him with the gun, authorities said. They face gun possession charges. Conspiracy charges against them are expected to be dropped later today. Defense lawyers said the boys had the gun for protection against rival gang members.

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