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McClatchy girls' feud led to plot, police say

Officials describe how 'silly high school stuff' took a serious turn.

By Ryan Lillis - Bee Staff Writer

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The alleged shooting plot at C.K. McClatchy High School stemmed from a couple of minor fights and some trash-talking over the Internet between two groups of girls, police said Friday.

The ongoing dispute nearly turned deadly Thursday, when a 15-year-old boy whose worst crime had been skipping school for 45 days was caught with a loaded gun and ammunition near campus, police said.

The boy, a runaway who is a friend of some of the girls involved in the dispute, planned to bring the gun into the school and shoot two female students with whom his friends had been fighting, according to police. Authorities have not released the boy's name because of his age.

Police said they are surprised the boy made the leap from truant to the alleged point man of a school shooting. Officers and school administrators did not consider him a serious troublemaker, said Sacramento Police Officer Mike Frazer, the school resource officer at McClatchy.

The boy has been listed as a missing person since running away from home about two months ago, City Councilman Rob Fong said.

Fong, who met with police and school officials Friday, said the boy has been living with the family of a 14-year-old Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 student who police said was carrying photographs of the two alleged targets when the boys were arrested Thursday morning.

The pair were among four teens arrested after police uncovered the alleged plot to shoot two girls over what Frazer described as "silly high school stuff."

A 14-year-old girl from McClatchy involved in the simmering dispute and a 13-year-old boy who attends John H. Still K-8 and provided the firearm also were arrested, police said.

"It's unfortunate that there are a lot of nice people involved who did some bad things," Frazer said. "Now they're going to be in the criminal justice system."

The students face a variety of charges, including conspiracy to commit assault with a deadly weapon. The 15-year-old boy also faces a weapons possession charge. All four are expected to appear in juvenile court Monday.

The two alleged targets of the plot "had no idea" how their photographs made their way into the boys' hands and knew the older boy only "in passing," Frazer said. Police and agents with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are investigating where the 13-year-old boy got the revolver, officials said.

The alleged shooting plot stemmed from a dispute between two groups of girls that began in mid-March,

police said. The dispute included "some minor physical altercations" and ongoing threats and eventually transformed into repeated verbal vitriol on MySpace.com, Frazer said. "It was typical girls not getting along," Frazer said.

Frazer said the six girls involved -- three on each side -- are "for the most part pretty likable young ladies."

To end the dispute before it became more violent, police and school administrators had scheduled a 9 a.m. meeting Thursday with both groups of girls, three of their male friends, and parents to mediate the situation, Frazer said.

About 30 minutes before the sit-down, Sacramento County Sheriff's Deputy Wayland Woodard, working as a Regional Transit security officer, was checking light-rail passengers for fare payments and looking for truants on the platform at the Freeport Fourth Avenue station. He stopped two teens who had just gotten off a train but didn't have train tickets or student IDs.

Woodard arrested the boys for alleged fare evasion and truancy, handcuffed both of them and placed one inside his patrol car. When the deputy searched the boys, he said he found ammunition, the gun and the photos. He radioed for help from Frazer and other city police officers.

Frazer said he arrived at the light-rail station about 8:40 a.m. and recognized two girls in the photographs as students involved in the ongoing dispute at McClatchy.

He notified the school of the alleged threat, and the girls -- along with the other students scheduled to attend the 9 a.m. meeting -- were detained.

"Officer Frazer did an outstanding job," said Sgt. Matt Young. "It's clear that without his knowledge of both the school and the student body, this investigation would not have gone as smoothly and as quickly as it did."

The school resource officer program started in 1999, when an officer was placed at Hiram Johnson High School. The following school year, officers were placed in every high school in the city.

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