Beat: Miscellaneous

UK man jailed for wearing "kill a cop 4 fun" t-shirt

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USPA News - A British man who wore a t-shirt with hand-written comments that glorified the murders of two Manchester police officers was sentenced Thursday to four months in prison, prompting free-speech campaigners to condemn what they described as a "heavy" sentence. Barry Thew, 39, of Radcliffe, earlier pled guilty to a Section 4A Public Order Offense by displaying writing or other visible representation with the intention of causing harassment, alarm or distress.

He was sentenced by the Minshull Street Crown Court to a total of eight months in prison, including four months for breaching the conditions of an earlier sentence for cannabis possession. Police said Thew was arrested at about 2:15 p.m. local time on September 18 after he was seen at Radcliffe town center while wearing a t-shirt with hand-written comments which glorified the murders of two Greater Manchester Police officers just 3.5 hours earlier. The t-shirt read "One less pig; perfect justice" on the front and "kill a cop 4 fun.com ha,haaa?" on the back. "While officers on the ground were just learning of and trying to come to terms with the devastating news that two colleagues had been murdered, Thew thought nothing of going out in public with a t-shirt daubed with appalling hand written comments on," said Inspector Bryn Williams of Greater Manchester Police. He added: "Thankfully the overwhelming response from the public ... prove that Thew is the exception and not the rule and our communities were right behind us at our darkest hour. To mock or joke about the tragic events of that morning is morally reprehensible and Thew has rightly been convicted and sentenced for his actions." But Nick Pickles, the director of civil liberties campaign group Big Brother Watch, condemned the sentence. "This is the latest in a string of heavy-handed sentences that suggests British law has lost sight of all proportion when dealing with certain forms of speech," he said. "However insensitive or upsetting the t-shirt may have been, it is absurd to suggest it warrants four months in prison." Earlier, Greater Manchester Police arrested a 22-year-old man from Netherley on suspicion of committing an offence under the Communications Act 2003. Officials said the man, whose name has not been released because he has not been charged yet, is accused of setting up a Facebook page which also glorified the police killings, calling the gunman a "legend." "The way the law deals with social media postings, offensive and insulting language is badly in need of reform before irreparable damage is done to freedom of speech," Pickles said on Thursday. Assistant Chief Constable Garry Shewan previously said the police murders had led to a small number of people posting malicious and upsetting comments online.

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