

BUSINESS

Target stores see more bomb threats over Pride merchandise

Locations in at least five states were evacuated this weekend, and no explosives were discovered



By [Jaclyn Peiser](#)

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Target stores in at least five states were evacuated this weekend after receiving bomb threats. Though no explosives were discovered, the incidents tie into the [backlash](#) over the retail chain's Pride Month merchandise.

The threats Saturday in parts of Oklahoma, New York, New Hampshire, Vermont and Louisiana mirror those made in recent weeks in Ohio, Utah and Pennsylvania. In most instances, unknown individuals emailed the threats to local news outlets. The FBI and the regional Joint Terrorism Task Force have been assisting with the investigation in some jurisdictions.

Law enforcement investigated the threats and determined the stores are safe, Target said in a statement. All stores are "currently open and operating regular hours."

"The safety of our team members and guests is our top priority," the statement said.

An email sent to Oklahoma City TV station KFOR on Saturday afternoon listed seven locations in and around the area, starting the message with “we are going play a game” and ending it with “4/19/1995” — the date of the Oklahoma City bombing. The email claimed two of the seven Target stores had bombs.

Several news outlets notified the Oklahoma City police of the threats, police department spokesman Gary Knight said in a statement. After the stores were evacuated as a precaution, police did not find any suspicious items, he said.

Target weeks earlier announced that it would pull back its merchandise for Pride Month after threats over this year’s collection. In a statement in late May, Target spokeswoman Kayla Castañeda said: “Given these volatile circumstances, we are making adjustments to our plans, including removing items that have been at the center of the most significant confrontational behavior.”

News outlets in Vermont, New Hampshire and New York received the same threatening email Saturday, according to South Burlington Police Chief Shawn Burke. The message, which accused Target of betraying the LGBTQ+ community, named a store in South Burlington, Vt., and ones in Plattsburgh, N.Y., and in Keene and West Lebanon, N.H.

Burke said his officers helped evacuate the store and do a “cursory search to render the store safe,” which lasted about 25 minutes.

“I think it had quite an impact locally,” he said. “It makes people a little bit uneasy to think about what’s going on. We’re more and more seeing this type of behavior in terms of swatting at schools locally and in terms of stores like Target [nationally],” referring to the practice of calling in fake life-threatening emergencies to provoke a heavily armed response from police.

At the Plattsburgh location, multiple law enforcement agencies investigated and “determined the threat to not be credible at this time,” according to a statement from the Clinton County sheriff’s office.

A spokesperson for the FBI said the department “remains vigilant and continues to work closely with our law enforcement partners on a state and local level.”

Police in Lafayette, La., searched two stores there and reviewed security footage after bomb threats were sent to multiple news organizations, according to KLFY. The unknown senders said Target “betrayed the LGBTQ+ community” and “are pathetic cowards who bowed to the wishes of far right extremists who want to exterminate us.”

Target, one of the nation’s largest general-merchandise retailers, is the latest company to find itself at the center of the culture wars. Store employees from Florida to Indiana have reported increasingly hostile interactions with customers angry about the store’s Pride collection.

Target pulled some LGBTQ+ merchandise and promotional materials back from store windows last month, citing worries about worker safety. The company did not specify which items were being removed, but misinformation in recent days has centered on its children's bathing suits that were falsely labeled as "tuck-friendly" by prominent conservative groups and media outlets. But the swimsuits, which provide extra coverage for transgender women without gender-affirming operations, came only in adult sizes, the [Associated Press](#) reported.

Several bomb threats soon followed, targeting stores in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Utah, from people claiming to be angry about the removal of merchandise.

The Target controversy follows the [backlash and boycotts](#) that Anheuser-Busch faced in April over its Bud Light partnership with transgender actress Dylan Mulvaney. Retailers such as Kohl's, Nike, North Face, PetSmart and Walmart also have faced ire for stocking items that extol equal rights and acceptance for gay, lesbian and transgender individuals.