Statement of Prosecution Witness Lee Meng

My name is Lee Meng, and I live at 345 Fake Street in Adhock, New Justice. I am the principal of William Jennings Bryan Middle School, a position I have held for four years. I felt a calling to education when I was in high school and decided to pursue a teaching career. I received my bachelor's degree in education from Drew University in 1986 and subsequently obtained master's degrees in school administrative policy and secondary education from the State University of New Justice in 1992 and 1994 respectively. I joined the faculty of William Jennings Bryan Middle School as a science teacher in 1986 right after I finished college. Prior to becoming principal I headed the science department from 1988 to 1991 and later served as vice-principal from 1992 to 1997. I accepted the position of principal in 1998.

I remember the morning of November 21, 2001 very clearly. I received a phone call at around 6:15 in the morning from our superintendent who said that school was cancelled, and he needed to see me immediately. After a quick shower and a cup of coffee, I left my house. I arrived at school at 7:30 and was horrified at what I saw. The school was surrounded by police cars, fire trucks, and trucks from other state agencies- namely the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Hazardous Waste Disposal Authority (HWDA). I ran up to superintendent Gigante, and he told me that there was some sort of accident that prompted a chemical spill. I then spoke with the police and found out that there was a breaking and entering into the school along with some major destruction to a science lab room and computer cluster. The school was sealed off and I was thus

unable to go inside at that time.

I was finally granted entrance to the school on November 24. By that time the chemicals had been contained, and I surveyed the damaged area with Detective Francis Nevico and my administrative assistant Jim Braycheck. The affected area was room 107, our brand new science lab room that also contained a cluster of twelve computers. This room was only two years old and had cost over $200,000 in equipment, furniture, and utilities. I was shocked at what I saw. All twelve computers had their screens smashed and were in pieces on the floor. All the laboratory glassware- beakers, flasks, countless test tubes, pipettes and bottles were shattered. The class cabinets that lined the wall were also broken and emptied of their contents to the floor. Worst of all, all of the chemicals in the lab had been poured all over the room, destroying the wood and plastic surfaces and melting parts of the floor. These chemicals also seeped into the floor drains and sinks of the lab and contaminated other parts of the school.

In all, four classrooms were made useless because of complications in ventilation and piping due to the incident. We were forced to suspend classes for a week, and when we resumed, we had to relocate some classes into portable classrooms which were rented and towed in because of the incident. The Adhock school system was not going to let this crime rob our children of their educations and was determined to function at all costs.

We resumed classes on November 28. The police department ruled the incident on the 2lst to be an act of vandalism. They suspected the vandal was most likely an angered WJBMS student. The only evidence found at the scene was a baseball bat and a ripped piece of flannel cloth. In an effort to find the perpetrator I began interviewing all the students who had class in room 107, 126 students

in all. In addition to my own in-school investigation, the police were also vigorously investigating the situation. At 10:15 that day eighth-grader Taylor Conroy, one of our top students, entered my office. Unlike the other student I had spoken to, s/he had some information. S/he said that Sydney Briggs, a student about whom I had known very little, said a few weeks earlier that s/he was "going to bring down this school and melt the science department." Taylor also said that Sydney frequently wore a shirt that resembled the cloth found at the scene. I notified the police of this information, and at 10:50 they arrived and escorted Sydney out of his/her third period math class.

I have had little contact with Sydney Briggs in his/her three years of school. I have spoken with him/her a few times as I make it a point to try to know all of my students. S/he has had few disciplinary problems, the only ones being lateness and talking during class. Sydney has good grades and is a center on our school's basketball team which won the middle school championship last year. I seriously hope s/he did not commit this rash act, but I still do want to find the true culprit of this crime.