

Denver mayor says violence won't be tolerated on 16th Street Mall

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Another video of people behaving badly on the 16th Street Mall led Denver Mayor Michael Hancock to blame marijuana for an increase in “urban travelers” and to renew his message that assaults and other violent behavior will not be tolerated.

“This is one of the results of the legalization of marijuana in Denver, and we’re going to have to deal with it,” Hancock said.

The latest incident involved a man swinging a large pipe at pedestrians near the McDonald’s at the intersection of Cleveland Place and the 16th Street Mall. A video of the wild behavior was posted online and received hundreds of thousands of views.

On Thursday, police identified the man arrested in connection with the attack as 32-year-old Clarence Seeley of Indiana. He was being held for investigation of aggravated assault.

The incident happened around 6 p.m. Wednesday, and deputy police chief David Quinones said police believe Seeley was involved in at least four other incidents within a few minutes of the attack caught on video.

Quinones said people had called 911 to report someone “acting up.”

Police described the weapon as a plastic, PVC-type pipe, in a Thursday news release. One victim suffered a head laceration, according to the news release from Denver Police, but all victims refused medical treatment.

Other victims left the scene before police arrived, and Quinones urged them to call to speak with investigators.

The video was the second in two weeks that showed people being assaulted on the mall. Last week, KDVR aired a report about a downtown business worker being assaulted by people on the mall.

Four people were charged in connection with that attack.

On Monday, Denver police and the Downtown Denver Partnership announced beefed up security plans that include the addition of private security guards and increased police foot patrols. During a news conference, Denver Police Chief Robert White urged downtown pot shops to stop selling single joints.

Although the mayor blamed recent trouble on “urban travelers” and marijuana, police do not know whether Seeley was on drugs or in the middle of a mental health crisis, Quinones said.

Still, Hancock stood by his insistence that the so-called travelers are a source of trouble. He said he personally talked to some and they were candid about the attraction of marijuana.

Earlier this week, Hancock called them a “scourge of hoodlums” during a news conference to announce the new security measures on the mall.

There are about 150 urban travelers in the city this week, Hancock said. They also hang out at Commons and Confluence parks, and they wander in and out of various homeless shelters.

“They’re taking beds from our chronically homeless people,” he said.

Most get to Denver by hitchhiking or hopping cargo trains, Quinones said. He defined the travelers as people who have been in Denver for a very short time and have no where to go.

When asked if Seeley was a traveler, Quinones said he fit the description. Seeley had been in Denver for nine days, he said.

Security is expected to be high on Friday as presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump speaks at the Western Conservative Summit at the Colorado Convention Center. Multiple protests are expected as tourists arrive for the July 4 weekend.

Hancock said officials also expect a record-number of tourists this weekend. On Thursday, he tried to assure the public that the mall is safe.

“These incidents are not Denver,” Hancock said. “That’s why we are moving quickly to deal with them.”