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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Man Charged with Federal Hate Crimes for Allegedly Shooting and Wounding Two Victims Leaving Synagogues

The Justice Department announced today charges against a former Riverside resident with two counts of hate crimes for allegedly targeting and shooting two Jewish men as they departed religious services outside two Los Angeles synagogues over the past two days.

According to the complaint, Jaime Tran, 28, targeted the two victims because they were Jewish or he believed them to be Jewish. Because the complaint contains allegations that Tran attempted to murder the two victims, the maximum statutory penalty for each of the two hate crimes is life without parole in federal prison. Tran made his first court appearance this afternoon after being arrested Thursday evening and charged this morning.

The complaint alleges that Tran committed the two hate-motivated attacks this week. Both shooting incidents took place in the Pico-Robertson district of Los Angeles.

In the first incident, which took place on Wednesday at approximately 9:45 a.m., Tran allegedly shot a victim at close range as the victim was leaving religious services at a synagogue. This victim survived the shooting, but he suffered a gunshot wound to the lower back.

In the second incident on Thursday at approximately 8 a.m., Tran allegedly shot a second victim at close range soon after he left religious services at a different synagogue in the same neighborhood. This second victim survived, but he sustained a gunshot wound to his upper arm.

Both shootings occurred in the same predominantly Jewish neighborhood of Los Angeles and both victims were dressed in clothing that visibly identified their Jewish faith, including black jackets and head coverings.

The evidence uncovered during the investigation indicates that Tran located the Jewish neighborhood after searching a popular business-review app for a kosher market in the Pico-Robertson district. After locating the market, Tran allegedly drove to the area, where the first shooting occurred. According to the complaint, Tran returned to the area the following day when the second shooting occurred.

Investigators acted quickly to identify Tran's vehicle, to collect witness statements, and to obtain background information on Tran that is outlined in the criminal complaint.

Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada for the Central District of California, Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division and Assistant Director in Charge Donald Alway of the FBI Los Angeles Field Office made the announcement.

The FBI Los Angeles Field Office and the Los Angeles Police Department are investigating the case. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Cathedral City Police Department and the Fountain Valley Police Department provided substantial assistance.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kathrynne Seiden and Maria Jhai of the Terrorism and Export Crimes Section and Frances Lewis of the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section for the Central District of California and the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division are prosecuting this case.

A complaint is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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