



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS EX-FBI AGENT AND ACCOMPLICE IN SCHEME TO COMMIT VIOLENT HOME-INVASION ROBBERY**

*SANTA ANA, Calif.* – A New Orleans man who was a special agent with the FBI for over a decade was convicted of several federal charges related to a scheme to commit a home-invasion robbery at a residence he thought was a drug “stash house.”

A federal jury this morning returned guilty verdicts against the former agent and his accomplice in the scheme to commit a home-invasion robbery of a house in Fountain Valley, California. Vo Duong “Ben” Tran and Yu Sung Park, now face mandatory minimum sentences of 30 years in federal prison.

Tran, 41, and Park, 36, of Chicago, were both found guilty of four felony counts: conspiracy to commit a robbery affecting interstate commerce, interstate travel to commit a crime of violence with a firearm, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence, and possession of a machine gun.

During the trial, prosecutors played scores of undercover recordings in which Tran repeatedly expressed an interest in traveling from New Orleans to Orange County over a weekend to commit an armed robbery. Tran also said that he would want to have one of his trusted, “dialed-in” associates participate in the robbery. Tran also stated that he would provide the necessary “tools” and “equipment,” namely, firearms, silencers and bullet-proof vests. Tran said that he stored firearms and equipment in safe-houses located in five states, including California.

On the tapes, Tran stated that he considered Orange County to be his “house,” and prosecutors argued that Tran was intent on developing a small crew

of criminal associates with whom he could commit violent crimes here in Southern California.

“Exploiting the special knowledge and training he received as a federal agent, Mr. Tran hatched a dangerous plot that easily could have resulted in horrific violence,” said United States Attorney Thomas P. O'Brien. “Now that a jury has determined that he is no different than the criminals he once pursued, Mr. Tran will join his new colleagues in a federal prison for many years to come.”

Salvador Hernandez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles, stated: “The investigation of Tran and Park began with information provided to the FBI by Fountain Valley Police Officers who uncovered the defendants' violent plot. This case is yet another example of police officers at the local level, working collaboratively with federal agents in multiple states, to build a case leading to a conviction.”

Fountain Valley Police Lieutenant Jim McNeff commented: “We are pleased with the jury's verdict and believe justice was served. Two dangerous men have been removed from society. We are grateful for the working relationship we experienced with the FBI and Orange County Sheriff's Dept. during this investigation.”

John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Los Angeles, commented: “ATF is pleased with the verdicts reached today. This is a great example of the collaborative efforts of law enforcement and prosecutors coming together to take these violent offenders off the streets.”

According to the evidence at trial, Tran and Park traveled to Southern California in 2008 and stayed at a Fountain Valley hotel. On the night of July 14, Tran and Park met with two men to plan an armed home-invasion robbery of a house in Fountain Valley. Tran and Park had been informed that the house was operated by a drug trafficking organization and was filled with drugs and cash. Unbeknownst to Tran and Park at the time, the purported drug stash house was vacant, and the other two persons attending the meeting were an undercover FBI agent and a private citizen working with the FBI.

Tran and Park were arrested after this meeting, and federal agents executed a search warrant at their hotel room, where they found five firearms,

including a machine gun, a silencer-equipped assault rifle and a .22-caliber handgun equipped with an integrated silencer. Agents also found 630 rounds of ammunition loaded into 30 separate magazines, two bullet-proof vests, camouflage clothing and electrical zip-ties that, according to defendants' recorded statements, were to be used to handcuff any persons found inside the targeted house.

Tran worked as a special agent in the FBI's Chicago Division Office from 1992 to April 2003. The evidence presented at trial showed that Tran was suspended by the FBI and placed on administrative leave in August 2001, and the FBI terminated his employment in April 2003.

Yu Sung Park had prior experience in law enforcement as well. He previously worked as an auxiliary officer with the Police Department for the city of Niles, Illinois.

Today's jury verdict concluded a four-week trial before United States District Judge Andrew J. Guilford. Tran and Park are scheduled to be sentenced on June 15. In light of the jury's special findings that defendants possessed a machine gun and two silencer-equipped firearms in furtherance of a crime of violence, both defendants are facing a statutorily mandated minimum sentence of 30 years in federal prison. The maximum possible sentence that the Court could impose is 70 years in federal prison.

The successful prosecution of Tran and Park is the result of a joint investigation by the Fountain Valley Police Department, the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office and the ATF in Los Angeles. Considerable assistance was provided throughout the investigation by the Regional Narcotics Suppression Program (a narcotics task force based in Orange County), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago and Louisiana, and the FBI in Louisiana and Chicago.

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