



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

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Hate Crime Charges Added Against Las Vegas Man Charged with Special Circumstances Murder, Lying in Wait in Laguna Woods Church Shooting That Left One Dead, Five Wounded

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A 68-year-old Las Vegas man accused of carrying out a mass shooting during a Taiwanese Presbyterian church celebration last month, killing a 52-year-old doctor and wounding five others, has now been charged with hate crime enhancements in the attack. Parishioners fought back against the shooter, eventually hogtying him and holding him until Sheriff’s deputies arrived.

David Wenwei Chou, 68, of Las Vegas, has been charged with one felony count of murder, five felony counts of premeditated attempted murder, four felony counts of possession of an explosive device, and felony enhancements of lying in wait and personal discharge of a firearm causing death.

Prosecutors filed an amended complaint this week to add a special circumstance that Chou intentionally killed his victim because of his race, color, religion, nationality, or country of origin, and five enhancements of a hate crime for each of the five counts of attempted murder.

Chou faces a maximum sentence of death if convicted on all charges.

“After a review of additional evidence in this case, the Orange County District Attorney’s Office has filed an amended criminal complaint to include hate crime allegations,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer.

On Sunday, May 15, 2022 Chou is accused of entering Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods with two 9 mm handguns, several backpacks including extra magazines and four Molotov cocktail-type devices. He is accused of hiding the backpacks in a church banquet hall, securing several of the banquet hall doors shut, and then mingling with parishioners who were there for a luncheon celebrating one of the church’s pastors.

Chou is accused of shooting several of the parishioners, including 52-year-old Dr. John Cheng who was there with his mother. According to witnesses, Dr. Cheng fought back against the shooter, but was fatally shot. When the shooter’s gun jammed several other parishioners attacked the shooter, hitting him with a chair and hogtying him with an electrical cord until Sheriff’s deputies arrived.

Five of the parishioners were wounded in the attack, ranging in age from 66 to 92 years old. All of the wounded were transported to Orange County trauma centers and they are all expected to survive.

Chou is scheduled to be arraigned at the Central Justice Center in C55 on August 19, 2022. Chou will be held on no bail as a result of the special circumstance murder charge.

Senior Deputy District Attorneys Jennifer Walker and Seton Hunt of the Homicide Unit are prosecuting this case.

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