

Gun buyer in massacre mused about troubles

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — Less than a month before his friend carried out the San Bernardino terror attack, the man who authorities say bought the assault rifles used in the massacre wondered when the multiple lives he was leading would come crashing down.

“Involved in terrorist plots, drugs, anti-social behavior, marriage, might go to prison for fraud, etc,” Enrique Marquez Jr. told someone in a Facebook chat Nov. 5.

The posting, described in court documents, foreshadowed trouble he was facing before any bullets started flying.

Now Marquez stands accused of terrorism-related charges and other counts linked to the San Bernardino shootings.

Marquez, 24, was charged Thursday with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists in deadly plots with Syed Rizwan Farook in 2011 and 2012 that they never carried out.

The duo, who had become adherents to radicalized Islam ideology as neighbors in Riverside, wanted to maximize carnage by using pipe bombs and guns to kill innocent people at a campus cafeteria and those stuck in rush hour traffic, court documents said.

Those plans may never have come to light if not for the attack where Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, used guns Marquez bought years ago to kill 14 people and wound 22 at a holiday meeting of Farook’s health department co-workers.

The FBI has labeled the shootings terrorism, making it the deadliest strike by Islamic extremists on American soil since Sept. 11, 2001.

Marquez was charged with illegally purchasing the rifles that the shooters used in the slaughter and were found with hours later after dying in a gun battle with police.

In his initial court appearance, Marquez looked disheveled. His short hair flopped over his forehead, there was stubble on his face, and the pockets of his black pants were turned out. He appeared calm and showed no emotion as he gave one-word answers to the judge.

No plea was entered and he was ordered held until a bail hearing Monday in U.S. District Court. If convicted of all three counts, he could face up to 35 years in federal prison.

His public defender declined comment, though friends and family have described him as a good person who was easygoing and liked to party.



In this courtroom sketch, Enrique Marquez Jr. appears in federal court in Riverside, Calif., Thursday.

Marquez, a former licensed security guard, was working at a Riverside bar at the time of the shooting and is not alleged to have had a role in the attack.

But prosecutors said he was linked to the killings by the guns and explosive materials he bought years earlier. The couple used that material in a remote-controlled pipe bomb that never detonated at the conference room where the shootings occurred.

“His prior purchase of the firearms and ongoing failure to warn authorities about Farook’s intent to commit mass murder had fatal consequences,” U.S. Attorney Eileen Decker said.

A lengthy affidavit by FBI special agent Joel Anderson outlines evidence against Marquez, including statements he gave investigators over 11 days after he waived his rights to remain silent and be represented by a lawyer.

Attorney E. Martin Estrada, a former federal prosecutor in Los Angeles, said the admissibility of Marquez’s statements to the FBI will likely be challenged by defense lawyers, but if the statements are allowed in court, they give prosecutors a very strong case because of corroborating evidence.

“This wasn’t a conversation with an average Joe,” Estrada said. “This was a conversation with a person that was capable and had the capacity and the intent to commit mass murder. That’s pretty chilling.”

The affidavit said Marquez called 911 hours after the attack to say his neighbor had used his gun in the shooting.

Marquez then showed up agitated at a hospital emergency room, saying he had downed nine beers and was “involved” in the shooting. He was involuntarily committed to a psychiatric ward.

Marquez lived next door to Farook, 28, who introduced him to Islam 10 years ago. Marquez told authorities he converted to Islam around age 16 and four years later was spending most of his time at Farook’s home, reading, listening to and watching “radical Islamic content” that included al-Qaida instructions on how to make bombs.

Four years ago, Marquez said, he and Farook planned to toss pipe bombs into the cafeteria at Riverside City College and then shoot people as they fled.

They also planned to throw pipe bombs on a busy section of freeway that has no exits, bringing traffic to a halt and then picking off motorists. Marquez would shoot from a nearby hillside, targeting police, as Farook fired at drivers from the road.

As part of the plan, Marquez bought two assault rifles — in November 2011 and February 2012. He said he agreed to buy them because “Farook looked Middle Eastern.”

Authorities previously said Marquez had legally purchased the guns Farook and Malik used. But the charges allege that Marquez lied by signing paperwork that said the guns were for himself or a family member.

The FBI has said Farook and Malik, 29, were radicalized before they met online in 2013, but the court documents show Farook had considered violent plots much earlier.

Marquez said he and Farook aborted their plans after authorities interrupted a terror plot in November 2012 that involved men who planned to join either the Taliban or al-Qaida.

Agreeing at last: Congress sends spending bill to Obama

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress ended its chaotic year on a surprising note of bipartisan unity and productivity Friday, overwhelmingly approving a massive 2016 tax and spending package and sending it to President Barack Obama, who signed it.

Obama welcomed the sprawling legislation, a rare compromise product of the divided government. It includes something for nearly everyone, from parents and teachers to Big Oil and small business, from 9/11 first responders to cybersecurity hawks and more.

“There’s some things in there that I don’t like, but that’s the nature of legislation and compromise, and I think the system worked,” the president said at his year-end news conference at the White House before traveling with his family on their annual vacation to Hawaii. “It was a good win.”

The legislation pairs two enormous bills: a \$1.14 trillion government-wide spending measure to fund every Cabinet agency through next September, and a \$680 billion tax package extending dozens of breaks touching all sectors of the economy, making several of them permanent and tossing the entire cost onto the deficit.

Republicans and Democrats joined to approve the spending bill on a resounding 316-113 vote in the House, a day after passing the tax bill. The unexpectedly large margin was a victory for new Speaker Paul Ryan, who saw a majority of his GOP lawmakers back the legislation despite complaints by frustrated conservatives whose priorities were ignored.

Not long after, the Senate voted 65-33 to send the entire package to Obama’s desk, and lawmakers began rushing out the Capitol’s exits to catch flights back home with Congress adjourning until January.

On Capitol Hill, it was a harmonious conclusion to a wild 2015 that was driven largely by tea party lawmakers pushing for showdowns with Obama on immigration, Planned Parenthood and the president’s health law. They never achieved their principal goals even with the Senate newly under GOP control, but along the way they forced out Ryan’s predecessor, John Boehner, and nearly shut down the Homeland Security Department.

On Friday several hardliners expressed disappointment over a year that ended with passage of a spending bill funding many of Obama’s priorities while excluding their own, including curbs on Syrian refugee resettlement in the U.S.

“The product we’re delivering this year is awful,” grouched GOP Rep. Dave Brat of Virginia.

Several of the GOP presidential candidates in the Senate were among those opposing the legislation, though Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida didn’t show up to vote. Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas and Rand Paul of Kentucky voted “no.”

Yet few conservatives were complaining about Ryan himself, and many lawmakers, Republicans and Democrats alike, proudly touted the accomplishments achieved since the new speaker was sworn in, including bipartisan bills on highways and education and a two-year budget and debt deal that paved the way for Friday’s spending and tax legislation.

“Truly historic,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., boasted on the Senate floor as he and Congress’ other top leaders of both parties took turns claiming credit for the holiday-season largesse.

Ryan himself told reporters he fielded a congratulatory call from Obama who thanked him for keeping government working and invited him to dinner at the White House in the new year.

Democratic leaders complained about a provision lifting the ban on exporting oil and the failure to address Puerto Rico’s fiscal woes.



The town square at Fieldstone Memory Care

Now open & accepting residents!



The Tri Cities’ newest and most innovative memory care community serving residents with Alzheimer’s, dementia, and Parkinson’s disease

Featuring studio, one bedroom, and companion living

Apartments starting at \$4,150
Levels of care included in base rate, please contact us for details.