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ATF investigates Saipan shooting



Li

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The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is working with the CNMI Department of Public Safety to investigate how 42-year-old Zhongren Li obtained the guns he used in the mass shooting in Saipan on Friday.

Li was an employee of the Kannat Tabla

shooting range, which had closed down earlier this year, CNMI Department of Public Safety spokesman Jason Tarkong said yesterday.

But Li wasn't a U.S. citizen and wouldn't have been able to legally own the weapons, Tarkong said.

Li had more than 750 rounds of ammunition, including .223 caliber bullets, .410 shotgun rounds and .22 magnum ammuni-

tion, in a van registered under the previous owner of the shooting range, according to a press release issued from the CNMI Department of Public Safety.

However, CNMI Public Safety officials said yesterday ATF officials are still investigating the serial numbers on the weapons to see if they were from the range or from elsewhere.

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Shooting: Motive is still being investigated

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Tarkong said the weapons at the shooting range would have been confiscated and secured at the DPS armory at the time the range was closed, thereby making the range non-operational.

Four of the five victims who were killed in Friday's shooting — members of the Naputi family — had lived in residential quarters adjacent to the shooting range. Eight more victims were injured, seven Korean tourists who were sightseeing at a tourist spot of World War II remnants miles away — in Marpi village — when Li opened fire, after leaving the carnage at Kannat Tabla.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigative Division found several notes from Li left in plain view at the shooting range, according to the DPS press release. Although DPS officials said the incident seemed premeditated, the motive is still being investigated. DPS officials think the incident may be related to issues about money and the suspect's emotional frustration, the release stated.

DPS officials confirmed Li attempted to destroy his personal identification and documents by setting it on fire on the passenger seat of the white van used in the crime, the release stated. Li is believed to have shot himself after firing shots at the



Pacific Daily News file

Scene: The Naputi residence, seen at right, is feet away from a shooting range in Kannat Tabla, Saipan. Four members of the Naputi family were killed and one was critically injured when a man opened fire from the shuttered shooting range. The suspect, Zhongren Li, who was an employee at the range, allegedly shot himself to death after the shooting rampage, which also injured several South Korean tourists.

group of South Korean tourists, according to the DPS.

"Police have made every attempt to notify the suspect's next of kin in the past 48 hours," the release from the DPS stated. "Case agent Detective Peter Aldan has contacted the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles

and requested for their assistance in locating the next of kin of Mr. Li."

On Saturday, Tarkong confirmed that Li had no relatives in Saipan.

Victims' status

One of the Korean victims who was critically injured, was trans-



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ported by Care Jet from the Commonwealth Health Center in Saipan to South Korea on Saturday night, the DPS release stated. He suffered from a gunshot wound to his back, which shattered his spine. He was in critical condition.

Thirty-nine-year-old Jai Hyung Park's older brother, Don Hyung Park, on Saturday said he had flown into Saipan early that morning from South Korea after he was informed of the incident. He said he was disappointed at the medical facilities available in Saipan and was waiting for his brother to reach a stable condition to fly back to South Korea for treatment.

Uk Yong Kim, who was on the tour with Jai Park, said he was also "horrified" at the medical facilities.

He also said that because guns are banned in South Korea, many of the tourists didn't understand what was going on at the time of the shooting. Kim was standing farther from the rest of the tour group taking photos when he heard the shots and saw objects bouncing, and felt that something wasn't right. Kim added that in a country where guns are legal, there is always the possibility of such an in-

cident occurring, even if a similar incident hasn't happened before.

Both Kim and Don Park said they were frustrated the shooter had to take down innocent victims with him.

"My head is empty," Don Park said on Saturday, sitting at the Saipan hospital's waiting room, dazed. "(Jai Park) just happened to be here at that time."

Meanwhile, Dolores Naputi, the 4-year-old Saipan girl who was shot in the chest on Friday, is recovering well, her mother, Kollin Deleon Guerrero said yesterday.

It was Naputi's birthday on Friday, and the Naputi family was preparing for her birthday party when Li opened fire at Kannat Tabla, according to Mario Naputi, a relative.

The DPS release stated that Dolores Naputi is now awake and talking and has been transferred to the pediatrics ward of the Saipan hospital Sunday afternoon.

Kollin Deleon Guerrero, who is expecting another child, said yesterday that she had gone to the store at the time of the shooting. Her husband, 30-year-old Enrique Naputi; her two-year old daughter, Corinna Naputi; and her godson, 5-year-old Vince Rosario, were killed in the tragedy, along with another relative, 22-year-old Richard Borja Naputi.