



Saudi Arabian Nationals Rented Guns, Bought Ammunition Illegally at Poway Shooting Range: Complaint

By Samantha Tatro and Paul Krueger



Two Saudi Arabian nationals have been arrested and a third is wanted for illegally renting firearms and purchasing ammunition at a shooting range in Poway. (Published Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2015)

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Two Saudi Arabian nationals have been arrested and a third is wanted for illegally renting firearms and purchasing ammunition at a shooting range in Poway.

Saad Mutlak Alsahli, Muath Ahmed Alraqibah and Abdulrahman Abdullah Alolaymi rented a Sig Sauer 9mm pistol and a Bravo .223 caliber rifle and bought 100 rounds of .223 caliber ammunition and 50 rounds of 9mm ammunition at the Poway Weapons and Gear gun range for target practice, according to a Southern District of California court complaint.

The men handed over Saudi Arabian driver's licenses as identification to rent the firearms and buy the ammunition for target practice, according to the complaint, signed by Matthew Schick, Special Agent for Homeland Security Investigations in the Department of Homeland Security.

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The gun range owner got suspicious when he saw them videotaping parts of their time there and contacted federal authorities.

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Homeland Security launched an investigation and obtained the gun range rental records and receipts, along with closed circuit video of the man shooting at the gun range.

The men are in the county on F-1 non-immigrant student visas. Under that visa, they are not allowed to possess firearms and ammunition without a valid permit. State records show none of the men had any permit for the firearms, the complaint says.

Neither of the two firearms rented, or the ammunition purchased, are manufactured in California and came from out-of-state.

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Nothing in the complaint obtained by NBC7 links the students to terrorism. Two sources tell NBC 7 San Diego the only alleged crime is the unlawful possession and use of guns and ammunition at the firing range.

John Kirby, a former federal prosecutor, told NBC7 he does not think the men would have been charged if they were not from the Middle East.

"Because I think there's this sense in this country that we're under siege, and that Middle Eastern folks are all potential terrorists," Kirby said.

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Ignorance of law, Kirby said, is not an excuse; however, he believes the men would not have done what they did in such an open fashion had they known the law.

In this case, as with others, prosecutors have discretion, Kirby said, and officials could have deported the men instead.

"I mean if you're Middle Eastern, and you have anything to do with firearms or explosives, or who knows, rat poison, the government is looking for you," Kirby said.

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Federal agents arrested two of the three suspects last week. The third, Alraqibah, left the U.S. before authorities could arrest him. There is a warrant out for his arrest.

Alsahli is represented by Michael Pancer and Alolaymi is represented by Andrew Nietor. Michael Wheat is the prosecuting attorney.

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