

California killer showed no signs of violence

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Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — With a young wife, infant daughter and government job, Syed Farook appeared to have arrived at a sweet-spot in life. Friends knew the 28-year-old by his quick smile, his devotion to his Muslim religion and earnest talk about cars he would restore.

They didn't know the man authorities say was busy with his wife, Tashfeen Malik, building homemade bombs and stockpiling thousands of rounds of ammunition for a commando-style assault Wednesday on a holiday party of his co-workers that killed 14 and injured 21.

"This was a person who was successful, who had a good job, a good income, a wife and a family. What was he missing in his life?" asked Nizaam Ali, who worshipped with Farook at a mosque in San Bernardino — the city east of Los Angeles where Farook killed and died.

As authorities identified the deceased and details about Farook's life began to take shape, the question of what motivated the slaughter remained unanswered.

The FBI was investigating the shootings as a potential act of terrorism but reached no firm conclusions Thursday, said a U.S. official briefed on the probe. Separately, a U.S. intelligence official said Farook had been in contact with known Islamic extremists on social media. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

At the same time, law



FBI agents investigate a car near a home in connection to the shootings in San Bernardino, Thursday in Redlands, Calif. A heavily armed man and woman opened fire Wednesday on a holiday banquet for his co-workers, killing multiple people and seriously wounding others in a precision assault, authorities said. | AP Photo

enforcement officials from local police to Attorney General Loretta Lynch cautioned it could have been work-related rage. Or a twisted hybrid of religion and personal vendetta.

Farook had no criminal record and was not under scrutiny by local or federal law enforcement before the attacks.

Authorities say that the couple sprayed as many as 75 rounds into the room before fleeing. They died four hours later and two miles away during a furious gunbattle with police.

The pair had more than 1,600 bullets when they were killed. Police said they also had 12 pipe bombs, tools to make more explosives, and more than 3,000 rounds of ammunition at home.

Police Lt. Mike Madden, one of the first officers to reach the room at the social services center, where Farook's colleagues from San Bernardino County's public health department had gathered, said the carnage was "unspeakable," the scene overwhelming; the smell of gunpowder,

the wails of the injured, the blood, fire sprinklers pumping and fire alarms blaring. All in a room with a Christmas tree and decorations on every table.

The dead ranged in age from 26 to 60. Among the 21 injured were two police officers hurt during the manhunt, authorities said. Two of the wounded remained in critical condition Thursday.

Nearly all the dead and wounded were county employees.

They were remembered Thursday night as several thousand mourners gathered at a local ball park for a candlelight and prayer vigil with leaders of several religions paying them tribute. Mayor Carey Davis urged people to "dedicate and commit ourselves to strengthen our families to overcome." The names of the dead were read and participants sang "God Bless America."

Syed Rizwan Farook

was born in Chicago on June 14, 1987, to parents born in Pakistan. He was raised in Southern California.

In July 2010, he was hired as a seasonal public employee and served until December of that year, according to a work history supplied by the county. In January 2012, he was rehired as a trainee environmental health specialist before being promoted two years later. Among his job duties was inspecting restaurants.



Farook

The soft-spoken Farook was known to pray every day at San Bernardino's Dar Al Uloom Al Islamiyah mosque. That is where Nizaam Ali and his brother Rahemaan Ali met Farook.

The last time Raheemaan Ali saw his friend was three weeks ago, when Farook abruptly stopped coming to pray. Rahemaan Ali said Farook seemed happy and his usual self. Both brothers said they never saw anything to make them think Farook was violent.

They remember when Farook announced that he would be getting married, saying he had met his future wife online and that she was Pakistani. Farook told the brothers that he traveled to Mecca in Saudi Arabia last summer.

They said he was gone about a month before returning to the U.S. with his wife. Malik arrived on a K-1 visa for fiancées and with a Pakistani passport in July 2014, authorities said.

Big question of Nov. job report looming

ECONOMY: Americans asking if pay growth moved upward after six years of small gains

By CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — As the government prepares to issue the November jobs report, a key question remains unanswered: Is the U.S. job market finally healthy enough to lift Americans' long-stagnant pay?

Some tantalizing signs have suggested that wages are beginning to pick up after barely moving in the 6½ years since the Great Recession officially ended. On Friday, the latest jobs data should offer some clues about whether the modest pay gains will continue.

By many measures, the job market is nearly back to normal. The unemployment rate is 5 percent, down from its 10 percent peak in 2009. Employers have added a robust average of 206,000 jobs a month this year, more than enough to keep lowering the jobless rate over time.

Economists have forecast that Friday's report will show that 200,000 more jobs were added in November and that the unemployment rate remained at 5 percent, according to data firm FactSet.

Even if hiring falls far short of those numbers, the Federal Reserve is widely expected to raise the short-term interest rate it controls for the first time in nine years after its next policy meeting Dec. 15-16. Friday's jobs report will be the last one the Fed will see before that meeting.

Fed Chair Janet Yellen said in a speech Wednesday that the job market should soon reach full health as long as the economy keeps growing at its current pace. More hiring and better pay should also lift inflation back up to the Fed's 2 percent target over time, Yellen added.

But given the significant gains the job market has made in recent years, the Fed won't likely be dissuaded from a rate hike later this month no matter what Friday's report says. "It is hard to imagine how weak (the report) would have to be for the Fed to reverse course," said Drew Matus, an economist at UBS.

Even so, wage growth has remained perhaps the job market's biggest weakness since the recession ended. Average hourly pay has grown at only about two-thirds of the pace typical of a healthy economy. Some economists point to the lagging pay as evidence that the job market isn't as healthy as the low unemployment rate would suggest.

With the number of unemployed dwindling, companies eventually should feel compelled to offer higher pay to attract and keep workers. Thicker paychecks, in turn, typically boost consumer spending and drive economic



We have seen a welcome pickup in the growth rate of average hourly earnings ... and of compensation per hour."

Janet Yellen, Fed Chair

growth.

There have been signs in recent weeks that the improving job market is finally raising pay. In October, average hourly earnings rose 2.5 percent from 12 months earlier — the fastest annual increase since the recession ended. It's still below the roughly 3.5 percent annual gain consistent of a strong economy.

And last week, the government said total wages and salaries rose at a much faster pace in the spring and summer than it had previously estimated.

"Rising wages are proof positive that we are at full employment," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. Full employment, as defined by most economists, is the lowest the unemployment rate can go without sparking inflation.

Yellen highlighted the potential turnaround in her speech Wednesday.

"We have seen a welcome pickup in the growth rate of average hourly earnings ... and of compensation per hour," she said.

Most economists expect pay increases to continue, though the data tends to be volatile and there may not be solid gains in each month's jobs report.

Jim O'Sullivan, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, says some of the income gains over the spring and summer likely reflected bonuses and other one-time payments. Those increases typically aren't captured in the average hourly pay data in the jobs report. They show up months later in tax data.

Some economists argue that the recent wage increases haven't been large or consistent enough to justify a Fed rate hike.

"If lots of firms were expecting to do lots of hiring soon, they would have to push up their wages to attract those new workers, and we would start seeing stronger upward pressure on both wages and prices," said Andrew Levin, an economist at Dartmouth and former Yellen adviser.

There are other signs that the job market still isn't fully healed. The number of part-time workers who would prefer full-time jobs remains above its pre-recession level. And millions of Americans have stopped looking for work since the recession ended, in part because they were discouraged by a lack of opportunities.

Still, the Fed's ability to reverse those trends is limited. Some Americans who haven't worked or looked for work for an extended period may need intensive job training, for example.

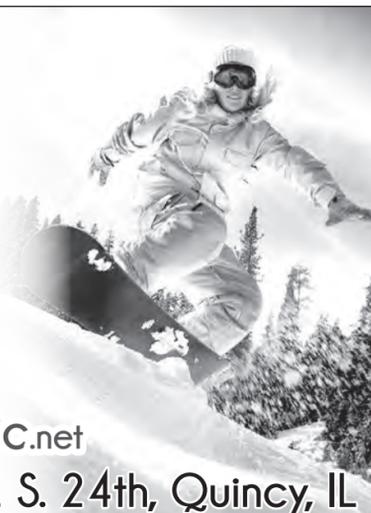
"The answer, if there is one, is in a set of policies from the government, not interest rate policies from the Federal Reserve," Matus said.

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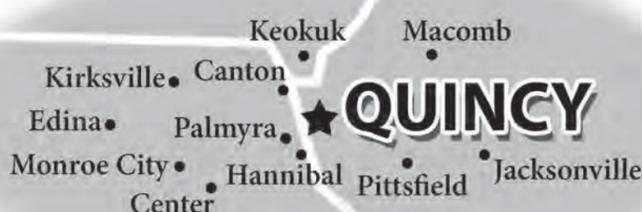
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