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New York City Man Charged with Federal Hate Crimes for Attack at Manhattan Synagogue

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice announced today that Larry Montes was charged with two counts of committing hate crimes in connection with his race- and religious-based assaults of a congregant and a security guard during a Shabbat service at a synagogue in Manhattan on Aug. 14, as well as one count of destruction of religious property resulting in bodily injury. Montes is currently in state custody and will be transported to and presented in Manhattan federal court at a later date to face the federal charges filed in the Southern District of New York.

“These charges serve as notice that the Department of Justice will intervene to protect the public in the face of antisemitic and racially motivated attacks,” said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “The Civil Rights Division stands ready to combat assaults against worshippers and houses of worship. Americans’ fundamental right to worship without fear of bias-motivated violence is sacrosanct and must be protected at all costs.”

“Today, the Southern District of New York filed federal charges against Larry Montes for his violent, hate-motivated attack during Shabbat services at Central Synagogue on August 14, in which he disrupted worship, struck a congregant, damaged synagogue property, and spat on and headbutted a security guard,” said U.S. Attorney Jamie McDonald for the Southern District of New York. “An attack on a house of worship is an attack on the fundamental right to practice one’s faith safely, and our Office will work tirelessly to ensure the defendant is held

fully accountable as we continue to protect all communities from hate-driven violence.”

“Larry Montes’ targeted acts of violence on a congregant, security guard, and synagogue during a Shabbat service are deeply disturbing,” said Assistant Director in Charge James C. Barnacle Jr. of the FBI New York Field Office. “The FBI condemns any incident driven by bias or hate, and we commend the swift actions of the security personnel and first responders. Hate crimes have no place in New York, and we remain steadfast in protecting every community.”

“As alleged in the complaint, Larry Montes brought violence to Jewish New Yorkers engaged in prayer when he disrupted Shabbat services at Central Synagogue in Manhattan,” said NYPD Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch. “I am grateful that an NYPD sergeant was there to take him into custody, and for the ongoing efforts of our Hate Crimes Task Force and our federal partners to hold Montes accountable for his alleged crimes.”

As alleged in the Complaint, on Aug. 14, at a Friday night Shabbat service attended by approximately 375 people at a synagogue in Manhattan, Montes stood up and began shouting and then physically struck and caused damage to two ceremonial silver candlesticks with gold accents. The head of security at the synagogue proceeded to attempt to remove Montes from the area where the service was taking place, during which Montes stated, in sum and substance, and among other things, “fuck you people” and “I don’t fuck with you people.” Montes also punched with a closed fist a woman (Victim-1) who was attending services at the synagogue and, later, while being handcuffed by security guards and law enforcement, looked at one of the security guards (Victim-2), who is a Black man, and stated, in sum and substance, “fuck you [n-word].” He then spat in Victim-2’s face and headbutted Victim-2 near Victim-2’s left eye socket. Montes also stated, in sum and substance, that he planned to return to the synagogue on a later date.

During a recorded, *Mirandized* post-arrest interview, Montes stated, in substance and in part, “fuck the Jews. . . . It’s racial” and “I will never affiliate with no filthy fucking synagogues, either here or in fucking Israel.” Montes also stated about his actions at the synagogue that “it’s all a racial thing” and that it was “all religious motivated.”

Montes, 46, of the Bronx, New York, is charged with two counts of committing hate crimes, each of which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, and one count of damage to religious property resulting in bodily injury, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

The statutory maximum sentences are prescribed by Congress and provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by a judge.

The prosecution of this case is being handled by the Office's Civil Rights and Human Trafficking Unit in the Criminal Division, with consultation from the Civil Rights Division of the Criminal Section. Assistant U.S. Attorney Meredith C. Foster for the Southern District of New York is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely allegations. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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