

New Mexico Republican arrested for attempting to kill Democratic office-holders

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On January 16, police in Albuquerque, New Mexico arrested Solomon Peña, 39, a Trump supporter and failed candidate for the state legislature, in connection with a series of four drive-by shootings that targeted local Democratic office-holders. The attempted assassinations began in December 2022, with the most recent shooting occurring on January 3.

Speaking at press conference Monday, Chief Harold Medina of the Albuquerque Police Department accused Peña of being the “mastermind” behind a terrorist cell that included four accomplices, at least one of whom is currently cooperating with the police. Police officials said it was unclear if Peña’s co-conspirators knew whom they were targeting.

The police claim to have evidence of Peña texting the addresses of the Democratic politicians to his accomplices and supplying cash for the attempted hits. In at least one instance Peña is believed to have participated personally in a shooting attack.

Peña exemplifies the far-right, terroristic elements being deliberately cultivated by former President Donald Trump and the fascist wing of the Republican Party, which, as seen in the crisis surrounding the election of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, has emerged as the dominant force in the GOP.

The fecklessness of the Democrats, who, more than two years after the attempted coup of January 6, 2021, have failed to prosecute let alone jail any of the ringleaders of the attempted overthrow of the Constitution, has only strengthened these forces within the capitalist political set-up.

Peña’s most recent Twitter update, posted on November 15, 2022, shows him wearing a “Make America Great Again” sweatshirt and standing next to Trump flags. Peña captioned the photo with a pledge of allegiance to the former president, writing, “Trump just announced for 2024. I stand with him.”

He added, “I never conceded my [New Mexico House District] 14 race,” in which he received barely a quarter of the vote, adding ominously, “Now researching my options.”

Revealing his ties to the fascist Lyndon LaRouche movement,

Peña added a link to the LaRouche PAC’s endorsement of Trump’s 2024 presidential run.

That Peña was even allowed to run for office is a demonstration of the advanced decay of bourgeois politics and the capitalist system as a whole.

Peña was convicted of multiple felonies in the 2000s for leading a more than year-long robbery ring in Albuquerque that targeted big box retail stores. Court documents reveal that in one instance he stole over \$10,000 worth of merchandise, mostly video game consoles.

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Despite spending at least seven years in prison after being convicted by a jury, Peña was allowed to run unopposed in his Republican primary last year. Like most Republicans, Peña centered his electoral campaign on his allegiance to Trump and the stolen election lies.

In the warrant for his arrest, police lay multiple charges, including being a felon in possession of a firearm, four counts of shooting into an occupied dwelling, four counts of shooting at or from a moving vehicle, one count of attempted aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, and four counts of conspiracy and criminal solicitation.

At Monday’s press conference, the Democratic mayor of Albuquerque Tim Keller confirmed that Peña was a candidate for office and said the series of attacks “was about a right-wing radical, an election denier” who turned to “violence.”

At the same press conference, Gilbert Gallegos Jr., a spokesman for the Albuquerque Police, revealed that Peña had visited the homes of at least three Bernalillo County Commissioners and State Senator Linda Lopez after his election defeat but prior to the shootings. Gallegos said that in each instance Peña confronted the politicians about his loss and claimed that there was fraud.

One commissioner who was visited by Peña said that as proof

of fraud, Peña pointed to the fact that he knocked on “thousands” of doors, yet he did not receive “thousands” of votes. Peña lost his November race to Democratic incumbent Representative Miguel Garcia, garnering only 26 percent of the vote compared to Garcia’s 74 percent.

Peña’s unprompted visit and absurd claims of election fraud prompted one commissioner, Adriann Barboa, to call police after Peña left to report his “erratic” behavior. Barboa said that Peña brought with him roughly 1,000 pages of documents, none of which substantiated his claims of voter fraud.

According to police, who have cited text messages, physical evidence, witnesses from inside and outside the conspiracy, video and audio footage, the group of five men, lead by Peña, conducted their first shooting on December 4. At least one man, paid by Peña, fired at least eight shots into the home of Bernalillo County Commissioner Barboa, located in Southeast Albuquerque.

According to police documents, Peña had texted “the complete and exact address” of Adriann Barboa’s home to Demetrio Trujillo, one of his accomplices, on December 4, 2022, the same day her house was struck by gunfire.

On December 8, New Mexico Speaker of the House Javier Martinez’s home was shot multiple times. According to police, a search of Demetrio Trujillo’s phone shows that on December 8, Peña texted Trujillo “the exact address of Speaker Martinez’s home address.”

Police allege that on that same day, December 8, Peña sent Trujillo another text message with the exact address of now ex-Bernalillo County Commissioner Debbie O’Malley’s home. On December 11, three days later, O’Malley’s home was targeted by gunfire, with at least 12 bullets hitting his house.

Police documents state that after this shooting Peña sent another text message, to an unspecified recipient, with the “complete and exact address of” state Senator Linda Lopez’s home. On January 3, Lopez’s home was hit with heavy gunfire.

At the time of the shooting, Lopez and her 10-year-old daughter, who had been sleeping, thought the loud bangs were fireworks.

Lopez’s daughter said she woke up because she thought she felt a spider crawling on her face. When she went back to bed she complained that it felt like there was “sand in her bed.”

In the morning, Lopez discovered multiple holes in her house. The “spider/sand” in her daughter’s bed was actually sheetrock that had blown into her face from the bullet passing through her bedroom walls.

Police claim to have recovered 12 shell casings and one bullet lodged in a vehicle that was parked in her driveway at the time. In surveillance footage from the next door neighbor’s residence at the time of the shooting, audio and video tapes indicate a “very rapid discharging of numerous rounds,” which “sounded like a modified fully automatic weapon.”

The evening Lopez’s home was targeted, a “ShotSpotter” system notified police that shots were fired in the vicinity of her home and a police officer was dispatched to the scene. The cop was able to recover eight 9 mm shell casings and one unspent 9 mm cartridge.

Roughly 40 minutes after the shooting, a different police officer made a traffic stop on a vehicle being driven by José Trujillo, the brother of Demetrio. Inside the vehicle police claim to have found 800 counterfeit oxycodone pills, a Glock 17 pistol with a drum magazine, and an “AR” semi-automatic rifle. The vehicle was registered to Peña.

Peña’s month-long rampage is one of several recent high-profile incidents in which fascists, motivated by Trump and his Republican allies’ stolen election lies, have violently targeted Trump’s political opponents. Last year, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s husband was nearly bludgeoned to death with a hammer by a fascist who broke into the Pelosis’ San Francisco home with the aim of taking the congresswoman hostage.

Also last year, Seattle police arrested Brett Forsell for stalking Democratic Representative Pramila Jayapal. Forsell had sent multiple threatening messages to Jayapal’s office and driven by her home repeatedly while yelling racist death threats. When Forsell was arrested by police outside Jayapal’s home last July, the Trump supporter was armed with Glock pistol that had a bullet in the chamber.



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