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## Orinda detective recognized for work with FBI, and nabbing 'the shaggy bank robber'



**Detective Denny Cai recognized** Photo Sora O'Doherty

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On April 17 Makela was in the city of Orinda when his mother called him around the time of the robbery. The call was captured by a cell phone tower near the bank. A couple of hours earlier, Makela's cell phone pinged off in Walnut Creek, where the vehicle was stolen. Cai now had probable cause to believe that Makela was the suspect. He obtained a Ramie warrant – a pre-complaint warrant that bypasses the district attorney who is looking for something proven beyond a reasonable doubt to file charges. The FBI wrote a search warrant for the suspect's house in Oakland. At the time, the Ramie warrant was still active. Orinda PD was the only agency that had a warrant out for Makela's arrest.

The FBI planned to do a search to find anything related to the robberies. On April 23, 19 search warrants were executed. Cai – the only police department detective involved in the search – met the FBI at a parking lot where 30 to 40 FBI agents gathered. Oakland police helped by closing off the road. When the group executed the warrants, the agents found disguises, fake facial hair, and a BB gun. A vehicle search revealed a pipe bomb, which the Alameda County bomb squad determined was a hoax bomb.

According to Makela's father, who was at the house being searched, Makela's wife had just given birth and his son was at Kaiser Oakland. Ramie warrant in hand, Cai and another Orinda police officer asked an Oakland sergeant for a couple of Oakland officers to join them.

In plain clothes, Cai knocked on the door, walked in and identified himself, he recalls, "then I took control of him, put him in handcuffs," adding, "Unfortunately the wife had to see all this." Cai told Makela he was under arrest for bank robbery and took his property – a laptop suitcase that contained a BB gun, methamphetamine, lottery tickets, and more than six cell phones.

Makela eventually confessed to the robberies and was charged with 19 counts, to which he pleaded guilty. Makela remains in jail pending sentencing in January. The 19 bank robberies netted him about \$70,000.

The Orinda City Council recognized Cai's accomplishment at its Dec. 3 meeting. Cai was also recognized as the Officer of the Year in 2016.

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