



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
TODD SPITZER

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**Jail Escapee Convicted in “Unnecessary Trial”;
Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer Denounces California
Governor Gavin Newsom, State Legislature for Reckless Law Changes to
Roll Back Sentencing, Allowing Felons Ever-Evolving Options to be
Released from Custody**

Prosecutors tried convicted kidnapper already serving two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole for escaping from jail as precaution to guard against potential future law changes that could change sentencing

SANTA ANA, Calif. — A convicted kidnapper already serving two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole and an additional seven years to life for kidnapping and torturing a marijuana dispensary owner was convicted today of masterminding an elaborate escape from the Orange County Men’s Central Jail along with two other inmates.

Hossein Nayeri, 44, Newport Beach, was awaiting trial on the kidnapping and torture charges when he escaped in 2016, leading law enforcement on a week-long manhunt for the three escaped inmates.

Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer denounced California Governor Gavin Newsom and the state Legislature for implementing reckless law changes to retroactively roll back sentencing and allow convicted felons ever-evolving options to be released from custody despite being previously sentenced under prior laws.

In 2011, Californians were the safest they had been in thirty years, with every metric showing crime was decreasing. The last ten years have seen a significant decline in public safety. According to the Pacific Research Institute’s Study [Paradise Lose: Crime in the Golden State 2011-2021](#), “more Californians are dead, have been sexually assaulted, and are the victims of traumatic injury,” than if legislative and public policy efforts including Assembly Bill 109 and Propositions 47 and 57 had not occurred. Instead of boosting prison capacity and increasing rehabilitation prospects, California opted to release prisoners who were unsafe to release, and essentially decriminalized drugs and theft, and handcuffed prosecutors from charging enhancements for gangs and guns. Inmates are being released back into our communities as a result of these dangerous legislative efforts – and they are reoffending.

“As a result of the state Legislature’s constant efforts to shift the scales of justice overwhelming in favor of criminals, there is no such thing as finality in sentencing anymore,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “A prisoner sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole today may very well be a free man walking the streets tomorrow due to the methodical campaign by California lawmakers to open prison doors and let as many felons back into our communities as possible. We as prosecutors – and protectors of public safety – have no choice but to continue to exercise every option we have to try to ensure monsters with no regard for human life or our laws will never be free. And if that means trying a man already sentenced to two consecutive life sentences with additional charges for crimes he committed, then that is what we are going to do even if today we don’t know if it will add one more day to his sentence. Nayeri is one of America’s most dangerous, conniving and manipulative criminals. We just don’t know what the future holds in California anymore.”

Nayeri was convicted today by a jury of one felony count of escape by a prisoner and one felony count of taking of a vehicle. He was found not guilty of kidnapping in the commission of a carjacking and all lesser included offenses.

At the time of the 2016 escape, Nayeri was being held at the Orange County Jail following his extradition back to the United States from the Czech Republic on charges he orchestrated the kidnapping and torture of a Newport Beach marijuana dispensary dealer in 2012 to steal thousands of dollars he believed were buried in the desert. He initially fled to Iran following the crimes before being lured to the Czech Republic which allowed him to be extradited to the United States.

On January 22, 2016, Nayeri is accused of escaping from the Orange County Jail along with inmates Bac Duong and a third inmate.

Prosecutor David McMurrin showed numerous videos and photographs of Nayeri who documented the months-long planning of the escape that entailed cutting through metal bunk beds and jailhouse plumbing tunnels before using a rope to rappel off the roof of the Orange County Jail. Photos on Nayeri’s phone showed Nayeri posing with a thumbs up in the jail plumbing tunnels.

Nayeri and the two other inmates are accused of rappelling down the side of the jail after making their way through air vents and onto the roof of the jail. Later that day, Duong called an unlicensed taxi service he located in a Vietnamese-language periodical, and 72-year-old Long Ma arrived to drive the three escapees to various locations in Orange County and Rosemead. After arriving at a location in Rosemead, the cab driver was held at gunpoint, told to turn over his phone and wallet, and was put in the back seat of his own vehicle. The cab driver was held at gunpoint at several instances.

Over the next six days, the three escapees and the abducted cab driver drove to several locations around California, ending up in San Jose.

On January 28 2016, Duong drove with Ma back to Southern California. On January 29, Duong arranged to turn himself in to authorities at a Santa Ana auto shop and after dropping Duong off at the auto shop, Ma was able to leave freely and drive away.

Nayeri and the third inmate were captured in San Francisco the next day after a man recognized the two escapees from media reports. Then-Orange County Supervisor Todd Spitzer presented Matthew Hay-Chapman with a \$100,000 reward for providing the information that led to the capture of Nayeri and the third escapee.

Bac Duong was convicted in April 2021 of one felony count of escape by a prisoner and one felony count of kidnapping. The jury failed to reach a verdict on one felony count of taking of a vehicle. The third inmate is still awaiting trial on the jail escape.

Deputy District Attorney David McMurrin of Special Prosecutions is prosecuting this case.

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