

Woman arrested in San Fernando Valley bank robberies

Police arrested a woman suspected of robbing two San Fernando Valley banks on Tuesday while two masked bandits escaped after an unrelated heist in Thousand Oaks, authorities said.

The unidentified woman, described only as an 18-year-old Latina, was arrested about 11:25 a.m. outside the Chase Bank in Mission Hills, officials said. Police had been summoned to the bank, located at 10348 Sepulveda Blvd., after an employee triggered a silent alarm.

The same woman is suspected of robbing a Citibank branch at 9051 Tampa Ave., in Northridge, about 10:50 a.m., officials said. She passed a note to the teller that demanded cash and threatened to harm customers.

"It's believed to be the same individual who robbed both banks," said FBI spokeswoman Laura Eimiller. "Based on the photo and M.O., they've linked them."

Authorities declined to release the suspect's name, citing their ongoing investigation.

However, they don't believe the suspect arrested in Mission Hills is the "Starlet Bandit" - a sunglasses-wearing woman blamed for at least 10 heists in the Valley in the last two months.

In fact, Eimiller said two other women were in custody in that case and investigators believe that the Starlet Bandit may have actually been several women, Eimiller said.

Eimiller declined to release their names, as well.

"Several robberies have been attributed to young females in the past month-and-a-half or so, and it's under investigation as to how many women might be conducting these robberies and whether they're linked to each other," Eimiller said. "There are possibly additional women responsible for robberies attributed to the Starlet Bandit."

In an unrelated incident, two gunmen wearing ski masks stormed into First California Bank on Hillcrest Drive in Thousand Oaks and hit a teller in the head with a handgun, according to the Ventura County Sheriff's Department.

The teller, who was treated by paramedics at the scene, told authorities the robber attacked her after complaining she wasn't moving fast enough when she was ordered to walk to the vault, said Detective Eric Buschow.

The two men fled in a white sedan shortly after the 10:35 a.m. robbery, Buschow said.

Officials do not release amounts stolen in bank robberies.

The suspects were described as black men in their 20s or 30s who were wearing gray ski masks

One was 5-foot-10 to 5-foot-11, 185 to 190 pounds and wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, sweat

pants and white tennis shoes.

The other was 5-foot-7 to 5-foot-9 with a medium build, and wearing a dark sweatshirt and pants.