SWAT OPERATION HERE CAPTURES CORRALES MAN ON 'WATCH LIST'

Corrales resident Robert Lester was the target of a SWAT (special weapons and tactics) police action early Sunday morning November 21 after he refused to surrender to authorities on a probation violation charge.

The arrest was directed by the N.M. Department of Corrections which sought SWAT reinforcement from the Rio Rancho police department, according to Corrections spokeswoman Tia Bland.

She said police were concerned the arrest could have turned dangerous because Lester was thought to belong to an anti-government group. Bland mentioned The Freeman's Society as one such group with which Lester may have been affiliated.

Bland said Lester was on an FBI "watch list."

A four-hour stand-off at a home on Camino Hermosa ended without violence, she said.

Lester had been placed on probation after a 2005 incident at the Albuquerque airport, Bland explained. He had refused to obey an order from an aviation security officer. The vehicle he was driving "came in contact with an officer and she was injured," Bland said.

For that he was arrested and taken to court where, three years later, a judge sentenced him to probation.

That involved periodic visits with a probation officer, but Bland said Lester had recently informed Corrections officials he would not continue to report to the probation officer.

"When someone violates the conditions of their probation, we go looking for them," Bland said. "We decided to pick him up."

Police arrived at the home at 4:30 a.m. that Sunday morning. After repeated refusals to surrender, police threw a device into the home which caused a loud noise that "forced him out," she said.

Bland said no weapons were found in the home. Literature considered anti-government was found.

The World Freeman's Society, according to sites on the internet, advocates ways to live free of government control and authority. One passage suggests that "knowing the right words to speak, you can revoke consent to being governed and choose to live under a common law jurisdiction and essentially be free from the government."

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