

Three arrested in kidnapping of two Bend men

by Cheryl McDermott

BEND, Ore. — Three men were arrested late Friday in connection with the alleged kidnapping and coercion of two men who were threatened with violence and weapons on June 2 and released unharmed the next morning, police reported.

(left to right) Mario A. Mendoza, Frank Michael Ponte, Joe Dennis Legg - DCJ photos

Few details of the alleged incident that began at 11 p.m., June 2, were divulged in a Bend Police news release prepared by Sgt. Brian Kindel, but two men identified as Mario A. Mendoza, 35, of Bend, and 39-year old Frank Michael Ponte of Redmond, allegedly took one victim against his will from a Bend home.

The suspects claimed the victim, Kevin Scott Taylor, 36, had stolen from them, Kindel said. Mendoza and Ponte allegedly took Taylor to a location north of Bend where they were joined by a third suspect, Joe Dennis Legg. Legg, 55, is also a Bend resident, said the sergeant.

The three men repeatedly threatened Taylor with violence and weapons, the news release stated, and the second victim was coerced into going to the location where the men were holding Taylor when he was told Taylor would be killed if he didn't respond.

Once the second victim, 37-year old Donald A. Coffman of Bend, arrived at the location, he, too, was threatened -- only to be released unharmed with Taylor the next morning just after daybreak, Kindel said.

An investigation into the alleged kidnappings led to execution of two search warrants where police were assisted by Deschutes County Sheriff's deputies and Central Oregon Emergency Response Team (CERT) members, the area's version of SWAT. The first raid was initiated at 1271 SW Silver Lake in Bend about 7:20 p.m., June 6, and the second at a residence in the Whispering Pines subdivision north of Bend about two hours later, the sergeant reported.

Mendoza, Ponte and Legg were arrested and lodged in the Deschutes County Jail. Although the investigation into the alleged incident is continuing, Kindel said the three Central Oregon men were charged with first-degree kidnapping, coercion and unlawful use of a weapon.

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