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Man jumps bail for kidnapping, assault charge

By Ron Maloney
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A local man with connections to two prison gangs is being sought on aggravated kidnapping and assault charges after failing to appear in court two days after his release on bail.

New Braunfels police Detective Jesse Villarreal said David R. Saldana Jr., known locally as “Pelon” or “Baldy” because of his short haircuts, was scheduled for a hearing in 297th Judicial District Court on Thursday, but didn’t appear.

District Judge Jack Robison issued a warrant for his arrest, setting bail at \$100,000 for each of the charges on Saldana.

The hearing had been set for the day after his indictment on charges of aggravated kidnapping and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

Both crimes are first-degree felonies. If proved at trial, Saldana faces between five and 99 years in state prison.

Villarreal arrested Saldana on April 10 in connection with an incident on April 3 in which he allegedly went to the home of his 36-year-old aunt and confronted her at gunpoint.

He herded her and her son, 9, into their vehicle and demanded a ride, Villarreal said.

In Spanish, Saldana allegedly told her, “Do what you’re told and you won’t get shot.”

At the time of his arrest, Precinct 3 Justice of the Peace Diana Guerrero set Saldana’s bail at \$500,000.

Saldana was released from custody on Tuesday, one day before his indictment, with the understanding he would appear in court on Thursday.

Comal County Assistant District Attorney Sam Katz said his office agreed to release Saldana on a personal recognizance bond because he was not indicted within 90 days of his incarceration as required by law.

“There were several questions and more investigative work to be done,” Katz said. “We needed more statements and additional information.”

Saldana and his attorney, Atanacio Campos, had reached a plea agreement, Katz said.

“It was agreed with his attorney that he would be in court on Thursday,” Katz said. “We had reached an agreement on his prison sentence. I’m sorry this happened, but we have to follow the law.”

Campos said he believed Saldana had failed to appear because of a miscommunication with his

office — and that it was his understanding he would be coming in shortly.

“He got out at the time I agreed to represent him Thursday morning,” Campos said. “By the time I got word to him, he was not available. I talked to his wife, and she told me he was going to come forward Monday.”

Saldana’s victims, Villarreal said, were notified of the release within minutes by the Texas Victim’s Information Notification Everyday (VINE) Program, a computerized telephone notification system that automatically informs victims of crime or any change in the status of a jail inmate. They have left town.

“They’re in a safe place,” Villarreal said.

Officials are concerned because Saldana has an extensive criminal history and has done prison time for violent felonies, Villarreal said.

“This young man has ties with the Texas Syndicate and the Mexican Mafia,” Villarreal said.

The Texas Syndicate, Villarreal said, originated among native Texan inmates in California’s Folsom prison in the early 1970s because Texans were being preyed upon by Californians who were members of the Aryan Brotherhood and the Mexican Mafia.

The gang provides jailhouse discipline, deals drugs and participates in pressure rackets and extortion, he said.

Rival gangs include La Nuestra Familia, the Mandingo Warriors and the Mexikanemi. Allies include the Texas Mafia and the Dirty White Boys and, more recently, the Mexican Mafia, Villarreal said, which is also known by its Spanish name, the “Emie.”

“They were two separate gangs at one time,” Villarreal said. “But intelligence suggests the two have merged. There’s strength in numbers.”

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