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Explosives suspect to go to New Mexico Two men related to former La Plata County commissioner

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A federal magistrate in Denver ruled Friday that Leslie Brown of Ignacio will be returned to New Mexico to face charges.

The case involving hundreds of pounds of explosives and detonators stolen from a site near Albuquerque involves two brothers of a prominent Ignacio man.

Brown, 44; his brother, David Brown, 49; and Eric Armstrong, 32, are accused of breaking into locked containers on an engineering company's storage site.

The Browns are brothers of J. Paul Brown, an Ignacio rancher, former La Plata County commissioner and former Ignacio school board member.

J. Paul Brown did not immediately return a reporter's call Friday.

The accused were arrested after an anonymous tip from an acquaintance. The tipster contacted Durango lawyer Amos Soignier, who called Special Agent Gary Ainsworth of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Leslie Brown, who has lived near Ignacio all his life, cannot be released from custody unless a federal judge in New Mexico allows it and he has a place to live, U.S. Magistrate Boyd Boland said during a brief hearing.

Leslie Brown's preliminary hearing will be in New Mexico.

Leslie Brown was living on property owned by his mother, and his mother is not willing to allow him to return, defense attorney Edward Harris said.

Harris asked the judge to allow his client to be released on bond when he can find housing, saying there was nothing to suggest he would be a danger to the community or fail to appear in court.

Prosecutor David Allison argued against release.

"The fact the defendant's own mother will not give him a place to stay speaks very loudly in this courtroom," he said.

David Brown and Eric Armstrong appeared in federal court in Albuquerque earlier this week. Special Agent Ainsworth testified the men told him they stole the explosives, two metal containers, a utility trailer and a truck, which they planned to sell to make some "quick cash."

On Friday, authorities arrested Robert Shaw of Bloomfield, N.M., on a charge of possession of a sawed-off shotgun. Shaw was with Armstrong in the stolen pickup when authorities arrived at the site near Bloomfield where most of the explosives were found last week.

ATF spokesman Tom Mangan said Shaw, who lived with Armstrong and David Brown, would likely face charges related to the explosives theft.

"We anticipate additional arrests in relation to the theft as the investigation continues," Mangan said late Friday.

The explosives disappeared earlier this month from containers stored by Cherry Engineering.

Stolen were 150 pounds of C-4, 250 pounds of sheet explosives, 20,000 feet of detonator cord and 2,500 blasting caps - enough to flatten a large building, authorities said.

The explosives were taken from the company owned by Chris Cherry, an expert who works with Sandia National Laboratories and was called in to defuse the last mail bomb sent by Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, according to an arrest affidavit signed by Kenneth Coffey, an ATF agent.

Leslie Brown took the equivalent of a 500-pound bomb back with him to Colorado, Coffey said. Prosecutors said some of the items stolen were highly specialized, shaped explosives used in the aerospace industry to separate the stages of rockets.

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