WANTED: Man who gave false name to investigator

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 30 June 2017 08:41

A June 3 traffic stop landed a Zuni man in some hot water for providing a Sheriff's investigator the wrong name during a traffic stop.

McKinley County Sheriff's Office Inv. Merle Bates pulled Rodney Laiwakete over when he noticed that he turned down a dirt road leading from Rehoboth, to avoid a sobriety checkpoint set up by New Mexico State Police on State Highway 118.

Bates stated in the affidavit for an arrest warrant that Laiwakete actually went around a coned area set up by State Police.

"The driver then told (Bates) that he was trying to avoid the check point due to his passengers being intoxicated," the warrant states.

Laiwakete claimed that he didn't have his driver's license with him, so he gave the name

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"Donovan Laiwakete" with his year of birth as 1976. Metro Dispatch drew a blank when running the name and birthdate, leading Bates to believe that he provided a false name.

When Bates told Laiwakete that he suspected him of providing a false name, Laiwakate responded by saying that he never had a driver's license or ID card before, and that he couldn't remember his Native American census and Social Security numbers.

Bates took a photo of Laiwakete before releasing him from the scene. The following day Bates was able to locate his mugshot and compare the photo taken of 45-year-old Laiwakete to confirm his identity.

"(Bates) also noticed that Laiwakete had signed the citation as Donovan Laiwakete, therefore he forged a document of legal efficacy," Bates handwrote on the warrant. "(Bates) also in the process of the investigation, learned that Rodney had attempted and/or used the identity of Donovan Laiwakete without his permission."

Bates said that Laiwakete is also wanted on a probation violation out of Zuni.

"(Zuni) are willing to get him extradited," he said.

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