

SWAT team swoops in

PORTSMOUTH - Just before 6 p.m. Saturday, Kevin Gifford walked out the front door of the Meadowbrook Inn and surrendered to more than a dozen state and local police officers, many outfitted in black SWAT gear and armed with assault rifles.

An armored Seacoast Emergency Response Team SWAT truck idled nearby. (BearCat)

Gifford, 40, who police say was living at the hotel and has family in Somersworth, was then spread-eagled against a parked car, handcuffed and arrested on a charge of resisting arrest and for an outstanding bench warrant.

By 9 p.m. the investigation was still active and police speculated more charges would be forthcoming.

Portsmouth Police Chief Michael Magnant was on the scene, where he said officers went to the Route 1 Bypass motel at 4 p.m. after receiving a call from an anonymous male. The caller reported that a man with "violent tendencies" was "holed up" in a motel room with a weapon, was alleged to be selling heroin and refusing to let a female companion leave, said the police chief.

According to Magnant, police determined the motel guest was Gifford and that he was wanted on an bench warrant from Somersworth District Court.

Magnant said a car Gifford parked behind the motel was thought to be stolen, but Gifford had not been charged as of Saturday evening.

Officers attempted to reach Gifford by telephone from outside the motel, said Magnant, but his response was to ignore the calls on some occasions and at other times to hang up. "He was refusing to come out," said the chief.



Kevin Gifford gives himself up to police outside the Meadowbrook Inn at the Portsmouth traffic circle after talking with a police negotiator.
Photo by Andrew Moore

At that point SERT members from Hampton, Portsmouth, New Castle and Seabrook were called in.

Magnant said a hostage negotiator was able to reach Gifford by telephone, and after an "extensive" conversation he agreed to surrender.

The motel driveway was blocked with yellow police tape while armed officers guarded the perimeters amid cruisers with flashing lights.

After Gifford was taken into custody, a group of SWAT members entered the \$59-a-room motel and searched the interior. Magnant said no woman was found inside, and at 9 p.m. police were waiting for a search warrant to look for further evidence.

Gifford's bail had not been set by that time, and he is expected to be arraigned in Portsmouth District Court Monday morning.

While SWAT officers manned the scene into the evening, the sun set, a near-full moon appeared overhead and a red neon motel office light switched on.