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Police deem no threat, end 24-hour protection for Rawles

Mesa councilman threatened after not standing for Pledge

Senta Scarborough and Gary Nelson

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Police ruled out that any direct threats were made against Mesa City Councilman Tom Rawles after he refused to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance earlier this week and have ended round-the-clock protection.

Mesa police assessed threats that appeared in newspaper online chats, blogs, and made in a phone call and determined the risk was low and posed no real, direct threat, Sgt. Chuck Trapani said Friday.

Rawles had received 24-hour police protection since Wednesday afternoon. It ended at 7 a.m. Friday.

Earlier in the week Rawles said the police escort was triggered by concern over three messages, two on blogs and one via phone.

"I think they were concerned enough about some of the e-mails and blogs to be cautious. Err on the side of safety until they have finished a threat assessment," Rawles said Thursday.

One blogger "talked about putting a bullet in me," he said. Another "talked about burying me in all the cement" at one of the facilities managed by Johnson Stewart Co., where Rawles works.

There also was a phoned threat "about taking me out behind the council building and beating the (expletive) out of me," he said.

Of the more than 250 e-mails sent to Rawles' City Hall account, none contained overt threats against him.

Rawles said he knew his stance would be controversial but had not anticipated such threats.

Rawles, a staunch advocate of limited government and fiscal restraint, stood for the prayer before Monday night's council meeting but sat down when Councilman Mike Whalen led the council and audience in the Pledge.

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