

Woman Denies Having Cat She Allegedly Held For Ransom

Police Say Woman Took Cat After Losing Dog

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GREENACRES, Fla. -- A South Florida woman has been charged with theft and extortion, accused by police of kidnapping a family's cat and holding it for ransom in hopes of getting her dog returned.

But she said she didn't do it.

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Police said it all began in May when Linda Urioste's black Labrador, Scooby, disappeared from her Greenacres' home.

The dog was picked up by Animal Care and Control and held for five days before being adopted by Jutta Hollar and her husband.

Hollar told WPBF News 25 that they had the pup -- now named "Buddy" -- about two weeks when they received word that Urioste had stopped by Animal Care and Control looking for him. Hollar said that she and her husband were considering returning the dog until they met with Urioste to discuss the situation.

"But she was very rude and yelled at us and treated us really not very nice," Hollar told WPBF. She said that they decided that Buddy was staying put when Urioste threatened to sue them. A few days after the confrontation, Hollar realized that the family's cat, Mitz, was gone from her usual outside spot. Hollar began to wonder where the cat could have gone when she said she received a phone call from Urioste.

"I was the used-to-be-owner, but I was wondering if you were missing a gray pussy cat. Because a pussy cat ran out in front of my car not far from your house and I saved its life. I almost ran him over. So, I was just wondering how you are enjoying Scooby, because I am enjoying your pussy cat while he is in his crate. You call it crate, I call it a cage. Have a nice day," Urioste is heard saying on an answering machine tape.

Greenacres police said that Urioste admitted to them that she had the cat and refused to give it back unless the Hollars gave her dog back.

Urioste was arrested and charged with theft and extortion. Mitz was returned to the Hollars' home safely.

"When I realized what she had done, it was just unbelievable. Just unbelievable," Hollar told WPBF.

When Urioste returned WPBF's calls, she said the story wasn't true.

"I nicely tried to get them to return my dog that I own, that I purchased, owned for three years," she said.

Urioste denied that she ever had the missing cat.

"Only last night did I get on the Internet to see all this commotion about the crazy woman who stole the dog for the cat," she said. "I don't know anything about a cat. I didn't have a cat. I never had a cat. I didn't take anybody's cat."

She said that the person on the Hollars' voice mail was the new dog's owner, Jutta Hollar, trying to frame Urioste.

"The recording on the Internet that I heard is the woman who has my dog," Urioste said. "I couldn't believe it when I heard it. I was shocked."

Urioste said the recording doesn't even sound like her. Off-camera, she revealed to WPBF that she couldn't take the loss of her dog because she had already suffered the loss of her baby granddaughter.

She said, three years ago, her husband accidentally left the baby in a car and she died. Urioste's husband was charged with manslaughter.

According to a police report, Urioste told police that she waited so long to look for her dog because she thought he had been stolen.

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