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Police called to Ivy Ridge to quell 'riot'

by David C. Shampine, Times Staff Writer

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OGDENSBURG - As many as 30 youths were reported Monday night to have escaped from Ivy Ridge Academy, the Route 37 facility which has been mired in recent months under allegations of abuse of its wards.

A source described the situation later in the night as a "riot," with an "uprising" occurring on the grounds and at least "30 kids off in the woods."

Some minor injuries, possibly from the use of fire extinguishers, were reported.

State troopers and St. Lawrence County sheriff's deputies responded to the site of former Mater Dei College after the escape was reported at 10:24 p.m., according to a police source.

Ogdensburg police and the U.S. Border Patrol were also called to assist, and the Ogdensburg and Morristown rescue squads were placed on standby.

Approximately 110 residents of the facility were gathered in the gymnasium while officials were dealing with the escape, and a call went out to install extra lighting, the source said.

Ivy Ridge is a behavior modification center for troubled teens, with a staff of about 150 attending to nearly 500 residents. It recently came under a second round of investigations into allegations of physical abuse against residents.

State police have been reported to have two investigations in progress.

A public relations person for Ivy Ridge said early last week that troopers report receiving about 40 calls a day from parents regarding various issues at the facility. None are of a serious nature, he said.

The state attorney general's office has investigated the facility, and in February, Children and Family Services conducted an unannounced visit there in response to physical abuse allegations.

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