

A man and a woman wanted in connection with a string of robberies in Minnesota and South Dakota were taken into custody in Nebraska after leading troopers on a short pursuit near Cozad.

Around 3:40 p.m., Monday, a state trooper observed a light colored Ford Crown Victoria traveling westbound on I-80 near the Lexington Interchange. The vehicle and plate number matched the description of a car wanted in connection with a series of armed robberies. The trooper called for backup and continued to follow the vehicle as it exited the Interstate at the Darr Interchange in Dawson County.

The vehicle traveled north to Highway 30 and headed west. A second trooper arrived and a traffic stop was initiated. The driver pulled the vehicle to the shoulder of the road.

As the troopers approached the vehicle, it sped off. A short pursuit ensued, with the vehicle headed west on Highway 30.

Approximately two miles west of Cozad, the suspect vehicle experienced engine trouble and pulled to the side of the road.

The male driver of the vehicle, Jarrod E. Birch, 24, Virginia Beach, Va., and a female passenger, Alyssa N. Beard, 19, Virginia Beach, Va., were taken into custody.

A search of the vehicle uncovered three handguns and burglary tools. The guns are believed to have been used during recent robberies in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Birch, was lodged in the Dawson County Jail on charges of felony flight to avoid arrest, willful reckless driving, felon in possession of a firearm, carrying a concealed weapon and possession of stolen property.

Beard, who is listed as a missing person out of Petersburg, Va., was lodged in the Dawson County Jail on charges of possession of stolen property and carrying a concealed weapon.