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PRESS RELEASE

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NINE DRUG TRAFFICKERS IN MCKINLEY COUNTY
CHARGED WITH FEDERAL DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENSES

On October 18, 2010, nine McKinley County residents were arrested on federal drug trafficking charges as a result of a five-month Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) investigation code-named “Operation Yé’iitsoh.” The investigation leading to the arrests began in May 2010 at the request of the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety (NNDPS) and for the purpose of combating the growing drug trafficking problem in and around the Navajo Reservation. The Operation was brought as part of the Native American Project (NAP) Initiative, which is supported by the DEA’s Albuquerque District Office in partnership with the BIA and the NNDPS.

The defendants, who generally are charged with unlawfully trafficking in methamphetamine and marijuana in three separate cases, are scheduled to appear before United States Magistrate Judge W. Daniel Schneider in Albuquerque later today. The indictment filed in *United States v. Jaramillo, et al.*, Criminal No. 10-2835, charges six of the defendants: **Jason Jaramillo**, 32, of Grants, NM; **Lance Rochlitz**, 28, of Grants, NM; **Michael Goodson**, 46, of Prewitt, NM; **Georgia Goodson**, 35, of Prewitt, NM; **Gilbert Aragon**, 33, of Grants, NM; and **Matthew Gonzales**, 40, of Grants, NM. The

indictment filed in United States v. Chato, et al., Criminal No. 10-2833, charges **Dion Chato**, 23, and **Nephi Chato**, 21, both residents of Tohatchi, NM; and the indictment filed in United States v. Patton, Criminal No. 10-2832, charges **Melvin Patton**, 37, of Crownpoint, NM. All three cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Samuel A. Hurtado.

Jaramillo Indictment – Summary of Charges

- Count 1: 21 U.S.C. § 846 – Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine and Marijuana. Maximum penalties: mandatory minimum 10 years to maximum life imprisonment and \$4,000,000 fine. All Defendants.
- Counts 2, 3 & 5: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(D) and 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Distribution of Marijuana, and Aiding and Abetting. Maximum penalties: not more than 5 years imprisonment and \$250,000 fine. Michael Goodson and Georgia Goodson.
- Count 4: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(B) and 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Distribution of Five Grams and More of Actual Methamphetamine, and Aiding and Abetting. Maximum penalties: mandatory minimum 5 years to maximum 40 years imprisonment and \$2,000,000 fine. Jaramillo, Rochlitz, Michael Goodson and Georgia Goodson.
- Counts 6 & 7: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(A) and 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Distribution of Fifty Grams and More of Actual Methamphetamine, and Aiding and Abetting. Maximum penalties: mandatory minimum 10 years to maximum life imprisonment and \$4,000,000 fine. All Defendants.
- Count 8: 21 U.S.C. § 856(a)(1) – Maintaining or Using a Place for the Distribution and Use of a Controlled Substance. Maximum penalties: not more than 20 years imprisonment and \$500,000 fine. Michael Goodson and Georgia Goodson.

Chato Indictment – Summary of Charges

- Count 1: 21 U.S.C. § 846 – Conspiracy to Distribute Marijuana. Maximum penalties: not more than 5 years imprisonment and \$25000,000 fine. Both Defendants.
- Counts 2, 3 & 4: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(D) and 18 U.S.C. § 2 – Distribution of Marijuana, and Aiding and Abetting. Maximum penalties: not more than 5 years imprisonment and \$25000,000 fine. Both Defendants.
- Counts 5 & 6: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(D) – Distribution of Marijuana. Maximum penalties: not more than 5 years imprisonment and \$25000,000 fine. Dion Chato.
- Count 7: 21 U.S.C. § 856(a)(1) – Maintaining or Using a Place for the Distribution and Use of a Controlled Substance. Maximum penalties: not more than 20 years imprisonment and \$500,000 fine. Both Defendants.

Patton Indictment – Summary of Charges

- Counts 1-3: 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(b)(1)(D) – Distribution of Marijuana. Maximum penalties: not more than 5 years imprisonment and \$25000,000 fine. Patton.
- Count 4: 21 U.S.C. § 856(a)(1) – Maintaining or Using a Place for the Distribution and Use of a Controlled Substance. Maximum penalties: not more than 20 years imprisonment and \$500,000 fine. Patton.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales praised the coordinated efforts of the investigators for their efforts to combat drug trafficking on the Navajo Reservation:

Unfortunately, no community is immune to the scourges of drug abuse and trafficking, particularly those associated with methamphetamine. The increasing drug problem in Indian Country contributes to the wide range of violent and property crime that plague our Native communities. I commend the agents and officers of the DEA, BIA and Navajo Nation for focusing on this particular problem and working together and with my Office in

combating these problems and trying to make our Native communities safer for the families who live there.

DEA Special Agent in Charge Joseph M. Arabit said:

DEA is committed to working with our law enforcement partners in the Indian Nations and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to target drug trafficking organizations responsible for the violence and social ills that plague our communities in the Southwest Border Region, including those on Native Lands. This investigation is an example of the success we can have when we combine our expertise and resources toward the common goal of making our communities safer places to live.

Yé'itsoh, or Big Giant, is a character in a Navajo legend that explains why lava can be found at Mt. Taylor, the stratovolcano in northwest New Mexico located northeast of Grants which is called *Tsoodzil*, the turquoise mountain, and considered sacred by the Navajo people and other Native Americans in New Mexico. Operation Yé'itsoh was designated as a Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF is a nationwide program that combines the resources and unique expertise of federal agencies, along with their local counterparts, in a coordinated attack against drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. The NAP Initiative, which sponsored Operation Yé'itsoh, is funded by the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) program and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Allegations in indictments are merely accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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