



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, September 3, 2009

For Information Contact Public Affairs
WYN HORNBUCKLE
Telephone: (602) 514-7573
Cell: (602) 740-2422

GILA RIVER MAN SENTENCED TO 16 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON AFTER KILLING HUALAPAI MAN WITH AXE

PHOENIX— Jonathan Bennie Yazzie, Jr., 20, of Peach Springs, Ariz. and a member of the Gila River Indian Community, was sentenced yesterday to 16 years in federal prison by U.S. District Court Judge Mary H. Murguia. Yazzie pleaded guilty on April 30, 2009, to Second Degree Murder for killing a 47-year-old member of the Hualapai Indian Tribe.

On November 11, 2008, Yazzie came home intoxicated to his mother's trailer and kicked open the door while people inside were sleeping. After forcing himself in, Yazzie started fighting with his stepfather. The victim stepped in to stop Yazzie from hurting his stepfather, and Yazzie turned on him. Yazzie assaulted the victim, got him to the ground, and kicked the victim in the head and body. Yazzie grabbed a wood-splitting maul or axe, and struck the victim in the back of the head, killing the victim instantly. Agents recovered the murder weapon outside the trailer, and the defendant's bloody handprint was found on the maul.

At sentencing, the Honorable Mary H. Murguia called the act a "brutal, violent death that the victim suffered" and noted that "what you [Yazzie] did was unjustifiable." In addition to the prison term, the court sentenced Yazzie to five years of supervised release and more than \$3,000 in restitution to the family of the victim and the Mohave Valley crime victim assistance fund.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Hualapai Nation Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Jennifer E. Green, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-01358-PHX-MHM
RELEASE NUMBER: 2009-283(Yazzie)

###

For more information on the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/az/>