



U.S. Department of Justice

Kenneth J. Gonzales

United States Attorney

District of New Mexico

201 3rd Street NW

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

CONTACT: *Elizabeth M. Martinez, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Public Affairs Officer*
elizabeth.martinez@usdoj.gov – 505-224-1469

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 8, 2010

NAVAJO MAN FACES ATTEMPTED MURDER CHARGE

Earlier today, **Michael Harrison**, 29, a member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Shiprock, New Mexico, appeared in federal court before United States Magistrate Judge W. Daniel Schneider on a criminal complaint charging him with attempted murder. According to the criminal complaint, Harrison attempted to murder his common-law wife Cherlyncia Yazzie, also a member of the Navajo Nation, by slashing her throat on September 23, 2010. If convicted of this offense, Harrison faces up to 20 years imprisonment, a maximum \$250,000 fine, and three years supervised release.

United States Kenneth J. Attorney Gonzales said that law enforcement authorities learned of the attack on Ms. Yazzie from staff at the Northern Navajo Medical Center (NNMC) who reported that Harrison drove Ms. Yazzie to the hospital on the afternoon of September 23, 2010 where she was treated for injuries to her throat. According to the criminal complaint, Ms. Yazzie's injuries included "a deep laceration that went through her trachea, windpipe, voice box, neck muscles, and close to the spinal cord." Upon receiving the report from the NNMC, officers of the Navajo Nation Department of Public

Safety went to the hospital where they arrested Harrison. Harrison was in the custody of the Navajo Nation until October 7, 2010, when he was arrested by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation based on the offense charged in the criminal complaint. Harrison is in custody pending a detention hearing on October 12, 2010.

U.S. Attorney Gonzales said:

Native American women suffer from violent crime at a rate three and a half times greater than the national average. The epidemic of violence against Native women is an affront to our shared humanity and it is something that we cannot allow to continue. Addressing violent crime in Indian Country, especially violence against Native women and children, is one of my priorities, and my Office is working with its federal, state and tribal partners to investigate and prosecute fully each and every crime brought to our attention.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Shiprock Division, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer Rozzoni.

Charges in criminal complaints are only accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.