

For Immediate Release
October 20, 2011

NAVAJO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL ASSAULT CHARGE

ALBUQUERQUE – **Ervin Yazzie**, 33, pled guilty to an assault resulting in serious bodily injury charge in Albuquerque federal court this morning. At sentencing, Yazzie faces a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment to be followed by not more than three years of supervised release. Yazzie, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, has been in federal custody since his arrest on May 3, 2011. He remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Yazzie pled guilty to assaulting an unarmed Navajo woman (Victim) with a baseball bat on July 17, 2008, in a location near the Twin Lakes Chapter House, which is northwest of Tohlokai, N.M., which is within the Navajo Indian Reservation. Yazzie initially was charged in a criminal complaint that was filed on March 22, 2011, and subsequently was indicted on May 25, 2011 and charged with (1) assault with a dangerous weapon, and (2) assault resulting in serious bodily injury offense.

This morning, Yazzie pled guilty to count 2 of the indictment, and admitted that, on July 17, 2008, he intentionally assaulted the Victim and severely injured her. In his plea agreement, Yazzie said that he attacked the Victim with a baseball bat as she was standing on a hill near the hogan where he was living. Yazzie admitted repeatedly striking the Victim in the face and head with the bat before fleeing from the area. Court records reflect that the Victim sustained life threatening injuries. After the assault, the Victim was airlifted to the University of New Mexico Hospital, where she remained comatose for a period of time followed by a three-week stay in the intensive care unit.

The case was investigated by the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Shiprock

Division, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S.

Attorney Mark T. Baker and Presiliano A. Torrez.

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