



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

**May 3, 2012**

**LAGUNA PUEBLO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL SECOND DEGREE  
MURDER AND ASSAULT CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in Albuquerque federal court, **Vincent Paul Francis**, 45, a member and resident of the Pueblo of Laguna, entered a guilty plea to an indictment charging him with two counts of second degree murder and one count of assault resulting in serious bodily injury under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Francis will be sentenced to ten years of imprisonment to be followed by three years of supervised release. Francis has been in federal custody since his arrest on December 19, 2011, and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Francis pled guilty to killing his girlfriend, Shannon Luarkie, 45, and his sister Anita Yazzie, 38, and seriously injuring a 20-year-old woman on November 20, 2011, by driving while intoxicated and crashing the vehicle that in which his victims were passengers. All of Francis’s victims were members of the Pueblo of Laguna, and the vehicle crash occurred near mile marker 134 on Interstate 40 and within the boundaries of the Pueblo of Laguna.

Court records reflect that the crash occurred on the afternoon of November 20, 2011, when Francis attempted to pass a semi-tractor and trailer without due regard to safety and clipped the semi’s front bumper, causing Francis’s vehicle to spin out of control across the median and onto eastbound oncoming traffic. Another semi-tractor and trailer was unable to avoid Francis’s vehicle and struck the vehicle head-on. Ms. Luarkie and Ms. Yazzie were pronounced dead at the scene, and the 20-year-old and Francis were transported to the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) for treatment of multiple internal and external injuries. At the time he received medical treatment at UNMH, Francis had a BAC of .148.

In entering his guilty plea, Francis admitted to killing Ms. Luarkie and Ms. Yazzie and seriously injuring another woman on November 20, 2011, while driving under the influence of alcohol.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the case was investigated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Laguna & Acoma Agencies, and the Pueblo of Laguna Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle T. Nayback.

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