



PRESS RELEASE

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**COUNSELOR, N.M., MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL
INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – Yesterday in federal court, Harlen Sam, 34, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Counselor, N.M., entered a guilty plea to two involuntary manslaughter charges under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Sam admitted causing the death of two passengers in his vehicle on May 4, 2012, when he crashed while driving under the influence of alcohol. The crash occurred on a dirt road about four miles east of the Ojo Encino Chapter House in Ojo Encino, N.M., which is located on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

Court records reflect that, on May 4, 2012, Sam was driving a vehicle with three adult and three child passengers when he crashed the vehicle. An elderly woman and a four-year-old boy died after being ejected from the vehicle during the crash. In his plea agreement, Sam admitted that he was driving while intoxicated when he crashed and caused the deaths of the two victims. Sam also acknowledged that his blood alcohol level was .08 when his blood was drawn within three hours of the collision.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Sam will receive a sentence of 46 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years of supervised release. Sam has been in federal custody since his arrest on May 4, 2012, and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the FBI, the Navajo Department of Public Safety and the New Mexico State Police, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle T. Nayback.

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