



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

FINAL DEFENDANT IN SEXUAL ABUSE CASE ON NAVAJO NATION RESERVATION IS SENTENCED TO 140 MONTHS

SALT LAKE CITY – Cynthia Bitsuie Jones, age 41, of Montezuma Creek, the final defendant to be sentenced as a part of a December 2009 sexual assault on the Navajo Nation, will serve 140 months in federal prison. U.S. District Judge Ted Stewart imposed the sentence this afternoon in U.S. District Court.

Bitsuie Jones was charged with two other defendants in connection with the December 2, 2009, sexual assault. Johnson Joe, age 43, of Montezuma Creek, who pleaded guilty to aggravated sexual assault, was sentenced in December to 110 months in federal prison. Michael Whitehorse, age 21, of Montezuma Creek, pleaded guilty to abusive sexual contact and was sentenced to 46 months in federal prison in October.

As a part of his plea agreement, Joe admitted he engaged in a sexual act with the victim of the crime while she was being forcibly restrained.

Whitehorse admitted to abusive sexual contact after engaging in sexual contact with the victim while she was forcibly restrained.

In her plea agreement, Bitsuie Jones admitted holding the victim down on the ground while Joe forcibly assaulted her. In a sentencing memorandum, federal prosecutors said facts in the case “clearly show that Ms. Bitsuie Jones caused serious bodily injury by severely assaulting, hitting and kicking the victim to the point that the victim was knocked to the ground, could barely see, and was eventually rendered unconscious.” The memorandum also said that “Ms. Bitsuie Jones yelled at both co-defendants and demanded that they sexually assault the victim with such force that it resulted in six distinct injuries.”

The three were arrested in December 2009 following an investigation conducted by the FBI and Navajo Nation Criminal Investigators. The assault occurred shortly after midnight. Bitsuie Jones, Joe, and Whitehorse beat and sexually assaulted the victim, then left her lying on the ground unconscious and with no clothes on. When the severely beaten victim woke up, she was able to find her clothing and get dressed but could not find her jacket or the keys to her vehicle. She was able to use a tool to start her car. With both eyes nearly swollen shut, she eventually made her way to a hospital where security guards helped her into the emergency room. Hospital workers documented 42 distinct injuries to her body.

Judge Ted Stewart also ordered Bitsuie Jones to be on supervised release for life once she completes her prison sentence.

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