



PRESS RELEASE

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October 18, 2012

**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS TOHAJIILEE MAN ON FIVE VIOLENT
FELONY OFFENSES ARISING OUT OF JUNE 3, 2011 CRIME SPREE**

ALBUQUERQUE – Yesterday evening, a federal jury sitting in Albuquerque found Jerome Yazzie, 36, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Tohajiilee, N.M., guilty on burglary, robbery, kidnapping and firearms charges after a three-day trial, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales and Carol K.O. Lee, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Albuquerque Division.

Yazzie was transferred from state custody to federal custody on Feb. 2, 2012, to answer to an eight-count indictment charging him with two counts of aggravated burglary, one count of robbery, one count of kidnapping, two counts of using a firearm in relation to a crime of violence, and two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm. The indictment alleged that Yazzie committed all eight offenses in Indian Country located within Bernalillo County, N.M., on June 3, 2011. It also alleged that Yazzie was prohibited from possessing firearms because he previously had been convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and aggravated assault resulting in serious bodily injury in the 2nd Judicial District Court for the State of New Mexico.

In Oct. 2012, the U.S. Attorney's Office moved to dismiss Count 7 of the indictment, one of the two felon in possession of a firearm offenses. The Court granted the motion on Oct. 10, 2012, and the case proceeded to trial on the remaining seven counts of the indictment on Oct. 15, 2012.

The evidence at trial established that, in the early hours of June 3, 2011, Yazzie forced his 15-year-old daughter and her 18-year-old boyfriend to accompany him as he engaged in a crime spree that included burglarizing two residences in Tohajiilee at gunpoint, committing a robbery, kidnapping a young man, and discharging his firearm.

According to witnesses, Yazzie, who was armed with a loaded shotgun, went to the first residence, which was occupied by a teenager and a young man, and kicked open the door. He burst into the residence where he discharged his shotgun and ordered his daughter and her boyfriend to restrain the teenager and the young man, while he burglarized the residence and robbed the teenager and young man of items in their possession.

Yazzie then continued to the second residence, which was occupied by a young married couple and their four-month infant. Yazzie knew that young couple would not voluntarily let him into their home because he unsuccessfully had attempted to gain entry earlier that day. As a result, Yazzie attempted to trick the couple by having young man from the first residence lure them into opening the door. Yazzie released the young man from his restraints, forced him to walk to the second residence at gunpoint, and demanded that he convince the couple to open the door. When the young couple refused to open the door, Yazzie attempted unsuccessfully to force his way into the residence. Yazzie walked the young man back to the first residence and, after restraining him again, Yazzie returned to the second residence.

During Yazzie's absence, the young couple took their infant and fled from their home. Upon his return, Yazzie forced his way into the second residence and ransacked the place as he looked for items to steal. Among other things, Yazzie stole cash, an X-box, and a computer and other electronics.

The jury deliberated approximately six hours before returning a verdict of guilty on the following five in the indictment: Count 1, aggravated burglary; Count 2, robbery; Count 3, using a firearm during a crime of violence (the burglary charged in Count 1); Count 4, kidnapping; and Count 5, using a firearm during a crime of violence (the kidnapping charged in Count 4). The jury acquitted Yazzie on Count 6, being a felon in possession of a firearm, and Count 8, the second aggravated burglary charge.

At sentencing, Yazzie faces a maximum penalty of 14 years of imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine for his aggravated burglary conviction; 15 years and a \$250,000 fine for his robbery conviction; and ten years and a \$250,000 fine for his kidnapping conviction. Yazzie also faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 35 years of imprisonment to be served consecutive to any other sentence imposed on Counts 1, 2 and 4 for his two firearms convictions. Yazzie remains in federal custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the Albuquerque Division of the FBI with assistance from the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark T. Baker and Jack E. Burkhead.

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