

For Immediate Release
June 20, 2011

THREE RESIDENTS OF SANTA CLARA PUEBLO CHARGED WITH FEDERAL MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING AND FIREARMS OFFENSES

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in federal court in Albuquerque, a United States Magistrate Judge found that there was probable cause to support a criminal complaint charging **John Roybal**, 34, **Sean Herrera**, 22, and **Christopher Whitsell**, 22, with (1) possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and (2) possession of firearms in relation to drug trafficking crimes. Roybal, Herrera and Whitsell live within the boundaries of the Pueblo of Santa Clara but are not members of the Pueblo. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment on the marijuana trafficking offense, and at least five years' imprisonment on the firearms offense. Roybal, Herrera and Whitsell each entered a not guilty plea to the offenses charged in the criminal complaint during this morning's proceedings, and were released under pretrial supervision pending trial.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Roybal, Herrera and Whitsell were arrested as part of an investigation brought pursuant to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Safe Trails/Safe Pueblos Initiative and Southwest HIDTA's Native American Project (NAP) funded through the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Through these two initiatives, federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies work together to promote a comprehensive law enforcement and community supported partnership that seeks to eliminate drug trafficking and substance abuse in the Pueblos of Santa Clara, Ohkay Owingeh and Pojoaque, which are located in New Mexico's Espanola Valley.

According to the criminal complaint, on June 16, 2011, officers of the FBI, Espanola Police Department and Pueblo of Santa Clara Police Department executed a search warrant at a

residence in Espanola, New Mexico. During the search, the officers found marijuana, narcotics trafficking paraphernalia, U.S. currency and a loaded shotgun in a bedroom occupied by Roybal, who is the owner of the residence searched. In a bedroom occupied by Herrera, the officers found marijuana, narcotics trafficking paraphernalia and a loaded semi-automatic weapon. In a bedroom occupied by Whitsell, the officers found marijuana, U.S. currency, narcotics trafficking paraphernalia and a loaded rifle.

This case was investigated by the FBI, the Espanola Police Department and the Pueblo of Santa Clara Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jack E. Burkhead.

A criminal complaint is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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