

For Immediate Release
June 24, 2011

**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS NAVAJO MAN FROM ARIZONA
OF ASSAULT AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE –United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales announced that, on June 22, 2011, a federal jury sitting in Santa Fe, New Mexico convicted **William Belin**, 57, of assault and firearms offenses after a three-day trial. The jury deliberated two hours before returning a guilty verdicts on all counts of a four-count indictment charging Belin with (1) assault with intent to commit murder; (2) assault with a dangerous weapon; (3) assault resulting in serious bodily injury; and (4) using a firearm in relation to a crime of violence.

At sentencing, Belin faces a maximum penalty of 20-years' imprisonment on the assault convictions. On the firearm conviction, Belin faces a minimum 10-year term of imprisonment to be served consecutive to the sentence imposed on the assault convictions. Belin, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, has been in federal custody since his arrest on July 7, 2010, and will remain detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The evidence at trial established that, at approximately 8:00 a.m. on July 7, 2010, Belin shot his 35-year-old girlfriend with a .22 caliber rifle. The shooting took place in victim's home located in Shiprock, New Mexico, within the exterior boundaries of the Navajo Nation. The bullet struck the victim on the left shoulder and exited her back, just below her neckline. The victim survived the shooting after receiving treatment for the through and through gunshot wound and other associated cuts and bruises she sustained during the assault.

Trial testimony established that Belin and the victim had been dating for approximately three years prior to the shooting, and had an on-again-off-again relationship checkered with violence. By July 2010, Belin believed the victim was dating other men, and that belief led him

to formulate a murder/suicide plot that he attempted to carry out on July 7, 2010. That morning, Belin drove from his home in Tees Nos Pos, Arizona, which is located approximately 30 miles from Shiprock, with a .22 caliber rifle loaded with at least six rounds. Upon arrival at the victim's home and after Belin and the victim briefly engaged in small talk, Belin returned to his car, retrieved the rifle, then went back inside the house, and shot the victim.

At trial, the victim described being in her bedroom when she saw Belin enter with the rifle in hand. According to her testimony, he raised the gun and pointed it at her chest. Just before he shot, the victim turned to her right and took the gunshot wound to her left shoulder. After being shot, the victim lunged toward Belin, grabbed the rifle, and struggled with him for possession of the gun. The victim's 15-year-old daughter, who was in the home asleep when her mother was shot, heard her mother scream for help and came to her rescue. The daughter found Belin and her mother in the bathroom, still struggling over the gun, and proceeded to repeatedly strike Belin with a baseball bat. She then called 911 for help.

Several minutes later, officers of the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety arrived and found Belin and the victim in a bedroom, both were covered in blood. The officers forcibly took Belin to the ground and placed him under arrest.

The case was investigated by the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Shiprock Division, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jack E. Burkhead.

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