



PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Elizabeth M. Martinez
Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney
Public Affairs Officer
elizabeth.martinez@usdoj.gov
505.224.1469

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**OKAY OWINGEH MAN SENTENCED TO 41 YEARS IN PRISON FOR
FEDERAL MURDER, ASSAULT AND FIREARMS CONVICTIONS**

ALBUQUERQUE – On December 10, 2012, a federal district judge sentenced 22-year-old Carl Ernesto Romero to a 41-year term of imprisonment for his convictions on second degree murder, assault and firearms charges. The judge is recommending that Romero serve his sentence in a maximum security penitentiary given the nature of his convictions. Romero will be on supervised release for three years after he completes his prison sentence.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that a federal jury convicted Romero, a member and resident of Okay Owingeh Pueblo, of murdering 26-year-old Naayaitch Friday, a member of the Arapaho Indian Tribe of Wyoming, within the boundaries of the San Ildelfonso Pueblo on April 11, 2009.

Romero was charged in a five-count indictment alleging offenses related to Mr. Friday's murder. In addition to the murder charge, the indictment charged Romero with four other offenses: the use of a firearm in relation to the violent crime of murder; assault with a dangerous weapon; assault resulting in serious bodily injury; and the use of a firearm in relation to the violent crime of assault. On March 11, 2011, a jury returned a guilty verdict on all five offenses. Although the jury did not convict Romero of first degree murder as charged in the indictment, it found him guilty of the lesser included offense of second degree murder.

The evidence at trial established that, Mr. Friday met Romero for the first time on the night of April 10, 2009, at a drive-in restaurant in Espanola, N.M., after Romero parked his vehicle in the parking space next to the space occupied by Mr. Friday. Later that night, Mr. Friday joined Romero and others at a casino located on the Santa Clara Pueblo, where they drank alcohol. The group left the casino and later returned at around 12:30 a.m. on April 11, 2011. After they were confronted by casino security officers in the parking lot, the group left the premises at approximately 12:45 a.m.

Mr. Friday's body was discovered in an arroyo on the San Ildelfonso Pueblo on the afternoon of April 11, 2009. An autopsy by the Office of the Medical Investigator established that Mr. Friday had been shot at close range in the chest and chin with a shotgun. On April 16,

2009, the FBI executed a search warrant at Romero's residence and seized the shotgun that was used to kill Mr. Friday.

While executing the search warrant, FBI agents interviewed Romero, who admitted killing Mr. Friday. Romero acknowledged socializing with Mr. Friday on the night of April 10, 2009 and the early hours of April 11, 2009. Romero also admitted that he had a verbal confrontation with Mr. Friday, during which he shot Mr. Friday in the chest. Mr. Friday fell back from the impact of the shot. Although Mr. Friday begged Romero not to shoot him again, Romero loaded another shotgun shell into his shotgun, shot Mr. Friday in the face, and left him to die in an arroyo on the San Ildefonso Pueblo.

Romero was arrested on April 16, 2009 and has been in federal custody since that time.

The case was investigated by the FBI and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Northern Agency, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Roberto D. Ortega and Charles L. Barth.

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