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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GRAND JUNCTION MAN SENTENCED FOR KILLING “BUDDY THE DOG”

DENVER – Steven Clay Romero, age 38, of Grand Junction, Colorado, was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Philip A. Brimmer to serve the maximum sentence provided by the law, 36 months in federal prison, followed by 12 months of supervised release for aggravated animal cruelty in the dragging death of “Buddy the Dog,” the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the National Park Service announced. Romero, who appeared in custody, was remanded to begin serving his sentence immediately. Judge Brimmer also ordered Romero to pay a \$500 fine, and \$343.68 in restitution to the owners of Buddy.

According to the indictment and subsequent guilty plea, in the early morning hours of December 30, 2009, a carcass of a large mixed-breed dog with a rope tied around its neck was discovered in the Colorado National Monument in Mesa County, Colorado. Evidence from surveillance photos and marks left in the snow indicated the dog had been dragged from the back of a pick-up truck. The Colorado National Monument is within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States and the District of Colorado.

Earlier that evening, Romero had taken the dog alive in the back of a pick-up truck to Colorado National Monument. Romero tied a rope to the dog’s neck and dragged the dog behind the truck until the dog was dead. By doing so, Romero needlessly mutilated, tortured and killed the dog.

Romero’s sister, Melissa Marie Lockhart is charged with being an accessory after the fact to aggravated animal cruelty for her attempt to cover up the dog’s murder. Her case is still pending. If convicted, Lockhart faces not more than 3 years in federal prison, and up to a \$250,000 fine, or both.

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The charges against Lockhart are only allegations and she is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The case was investigated by the National Park Service, which is a division of the Department of Interior, the Delta Police Department, the Fruita Police Department, the Grand Junction Police Department, the Mesa County Sheriff's Office, and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

Romero and Lockhart are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Heldmyer.

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