ALBUQUERQUE – Abner Joe, 55, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Shiprock, N.M., pled guilty t in federal court in Albuquerque July 12, to assaulting a federal officer.

Joe was arrested on Aug. 10, 2016, on a criminal complaint charging him with assaulting a federal officer. According to the complaint, Joe assaulted an officer of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety on Aug. 4, 2016, by spitting on her and threatening her with a hammer and a wooden board. At the time of the assault, the tribal officer was commissioned as a Special Federal Officer by the BIA's Office of Justice Services.

Joe was indicted on Aug. 23, 2016, and charged with assaulting a federal officer with a dangerous weapon and assault involving physical contact. The indictment alleged that Joe committed the crimes on Aug. 4, 2016, on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County, N.M.

During the proceedings, Joe pled guilty to assaulting a federal officer. In entering the guilty plea, Joe admitted that on Aug. 4, 2016, he threatened two uniformed tribal officers as he approached them while holding a raised 2" x 4" board. He also admitted throwing a hammer at one of the tribal officers who was commissioned as a Special Federal Officer by the BIA.

At sentencing, Joe faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. A sentencing hearing has yet to be scheduled.

This case was investigated by the Farmington office of the FBI and the Shiprock office of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety. Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Murphy is prosecuting the case.

Staff Reports