Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
Friday, 29 September 2017 02:55



Gallup Police Department Detectives arrested Montoya Johnson of Crownpoint on a warrant for first degree murder and tampering with evidence Sept. 27.

According to the arrest warrant, Johnson, 42, allegedly stabbed Raymond Peshlakai on the 600 block of south Second Street Sept. 23 – south of the old post office and north of DE Armand Mechanical Shop.

Johnson is being held at the McKinley County Adult Detention Center on a $20,000 cash-only bond.

The assault-turned-homicide scene unfolded as Gallup Community Service Aide Jarad Albert arrived at the scene, shortly before 11 pm, and found Peshlakai unconscious and bleeding from a stab wound to the chest.

The single wound proved fatal.

There was a small crowd around the victim when Albert arrived on scene, but his immediate attention was directed at keeping Peshlakai alive by stopping the bleeding as well as he could.

As other Gallup Police officers showed up to the scene, witnesses were found and statements taken, but despite all the efforts, not much was found that would lead to an immediate arrest.

There were two women and one man who were questioned, but their presence turned out to be circumstantial and they were released.

A break in the case occurred Sept. 26, wgeb GPD Officer Darius Johnson was sent to the walkway located between Coal and Aztec avenues and Second and Third streets to check on a report of an inebriated man waving a knife around in a dangerous manner.

This turned out to be the murder suspect.

A witness pointed out where Johnson had thrown the knife, and Gaona easily located and collected it as evidence. Johnson was taken to Gallup Detox Center.

Meanwhile, GPD Det. John Yearly noted that the knife recovered had a “red in color tinted substance on the blade,” and logged it as evidence for further examination. The knife is about 10-inches long, with a five-inch handle.

Johnson also had “small skin abrasions on his left hand and elbow, and scratches on his right inside wrist,” Det. Jon Whitsitt observed, according to the warrant. His clothes were collected, and evidence of blood was discovered.

Another break in the case occurred when an eyewitness, who police asked not to name, was tracked down to give a statement. It turned out that detectives hit the witness jackpot.

This witness had blood on the hands and fingers, and reportedly saw Johnson murder Peshlakai. The witness said Johnson had been upset that night because a female friend of his had been badly beaten by a street character by the nickname of “Tall Wolf.”

The chance encounter with another street person, Peshlakai a.k.a. “Black Wolf” was enough to cause the perpetrator to lash out, with a single blow, and take a life.

When GPD detectives attempted to interview Johnson, he asked for his lawyer, promptly ending the meeting.

Johnson remains in custody as of press time Sept. 28.

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