

Man sentenced to 30 years in shooting death of Navajo Police Officer

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ALBUQUERQUE — Kirby Cleveland was sentenced in federal court for the shooting death of Navajo Police Officer Houston James Largo in March 2017. Largo was shot on March 11. He died on March 12.

Largo responded to a domestic violence call in Prewitt. He was 27 years old at the time.

Officer Largo was with the Navajo Police Department for five years and was a recipient of the Lifesaving Award and the 2016 Indian Country Officer of the Year. He was also employed with the Gallup Police Department where he received the City Officer of the Year in 2011. Officer Largo served with the Crownpoint Police District.

Cleveland pleaded guilty in 2019 to the second degree murder of Largo. He received an enhanced sentence of 30 years, with the courts following sentencing guidelines. He faced up to life in prison for second-degree murder.

Attending the hearing to express support for Officer Largo and stand in solidarity with his family, were Chief of Police Phillip Francisco, Division Director Jesse Delmar, and Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie. Numerous NPD officers and criminal investigators witnessed the hearing via live stream.

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“This has been a long and emotional journey for everyone, more so for the family of Houston. As his police family, it was important for us to stand with his family and support them during this difficult time,” Chief Francisco said. “This sentencing brings some level of closure, but the pain of losing a loved one never gets easy.

“We are grateful for the judge’s enhanced sentencing of Kirby Cleveland, but in comparison, 30 years is little for the life taken and the pain it has caused. Officer Largo was out there that night to answer someone’s call for help and he will always be remembered by his department, his family, and his people as a protector of his community,” Francisco said.

Also memorializing Largo was Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

“Officer Largo will always be remembered as a frontline warrior, who devoted his life to serving and protecting our Navajo people,” Nez said. “Our prayers are with his family, his fellow officers, and his community as they continue on the path of healing.

“I appreciate the support and commitment of Police Chief Francisco, Mr. Delmar, and Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie for Officer Largo’s family and all of our Navajo Police Officers. We will continue to pray for strength, comfort, and healing for the Largo family.” Nez said.

The FBI and the Crownpoint, Shiprock, and Chinle offices of the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety investigated this case with assistance from the New Mexico State Police, McKinley County Sheriff’s Office, Albuquerque Police Department, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph M. Spindle and Jeremy Peña prosecuted the case.