

Pinehill man charged with murder, assault

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A man from Pinehill, New Mexico has been charged with murder and assault after he allegedly shot three of his family members.

According to the criminal complaint, on the morning of Dec. 22, the Ramah Navajo Police Department received an emergency call from a witness who stated that Ellery Brent Yazzie shot his father, sister, and brother at a residence in Pinehill following a verbal argument.

When officers arrived at the residence, they found the two men dead at the scene and Yazzie, 36, and an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, alive with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The witness had attempted to drive the third victim to the hospital but linked up with an ambulance enroute which transported the victim to Zuni Hospital. Physicians advised a special agent from the FBI that the victim sustained life-threatening injuries and would have died without timely medical care. The victims were all enrolled members of the Navajo Nation.

Alexander M.M. Uballez, United States Attorney for the District of New Mexico, and Raul Bujanda, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Albuquerque Field Office, announced on Jan. 25 that Yazzie appeared in federal court on a criminal complaint charging him with murder, assault with a dangerous weapon, assault resulting in serious bodily injury, and using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. Yazzie will remain in custody pending trial, which is currently not scheduled.

A criminal complaint is only an allegation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted on the current charges, Yazzie faces up to life in prison.

The Gallup Resident Agency of the FBI Albuquerque Field Office investigated this case with assistance from the Ramah Navajo Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Caitlin L. Dillon and Jena Ritchey are prosecuting the case.

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