

Navajo brothers sentenced to prison for murder

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 27 January 2017 09:37



ALBUQUERQUE – Two brothers, both enrolled members of the Navajo Nation who reside in Kirtland were sentenced Jan. 24 in federal court in Albuquerque for convictions arising out of the March 21, 2015 murder of a Navajo man.

Elijah Shirley, 31, was sentenced to 121 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release, and Michael Shirley, 32, was sentenced to 63 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release.

According to court filings, Elijah Shirley, Michael Shirley, and their brother Maynard Shirley, 38, were charged with murdering a Navajo man and assaulting the murder victim's father.

The defendants committed the crimes on March 21, 2015, in Fruitland. The three men were indicted on April 14, 2015, and charged with killing the victim by stabbing him with a knife, and assaulting the victim's father with a dangerous weapon and causing him to suffer serious bodily injury.

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Elijah Shirley entered a guilty plea on Sept. 21 to a felony information charging him with voluntary manslaughter, and admitted stabbing and killing the victim in the heat of passion. On that same day, Michael Shirley pled guilty to a felony information, charging him with being an accessory after the fact, and admitted that after they killed the victim, he assisted Elijah Shirley by burning a BMW vehicle and Maynard Shirley by helping him secure housing and transportation.

Maynard Shirley pled guilty on Dec. 13 to a felony information charging him with being an accessory after the fact to the offense of voluntary manslaughter. Under the terms of his plea agreement, Maynard Shirley will be sentenced to 42 months in prison followed by a term of supervised release to be determined by the court. Maynard Shirley remains in custody pending a sentencing hearing, which is scheduled for Feb. 13.

The case was investigated by the Farmington office of the FBI and the Shiprock and Kayenta offices of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, and are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Niki Tapia-Brito and Nicholas Marshall.