

For Immediate Release
February 9, 2012

PINEDALE MAN CHARGED WITH MURDERING GIRLFRIEND

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, FBI agents arrested **MacArthur Cooke**, 36, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Pinedale, N.M., on a federal criminal complaint charging him with murder. Cooke made his initial appearance in federal court in Albuquerque earlier today, and is scheduled for a preliminary hearing at 9:30 a.m. on February 10, 2012. Cooke is temporarily detained pending a detention hearing that will follow immediately after his preliminary hearing.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Cooke is charged with killing Vivian Watson, a 29-year-old Navajo woman, on January 13, 2012, in Vanderwagen, N.M., which is located within the Navajo Indian Reservation. According to the criminal complaint, Cooke allegedly killed Ms. Watson, his girlfriend of two years, with an axe in her Vanderwagen home. The complaint alleges that the New Mexico Office of Medical Examiner has opined that the cause of Ms. Watson's death was multiple, heavy, sharp force/chop wounds to the head, and that Ms. Watson's wounds were consistent with those made with an axe.

Cooke was arrested on tribal charges on January 13, 2012 and remained in the custody of the Navajo Nation until his arrest on federal charges today.

If convicted of the offense charged in the complaint, Cooke faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jacob Wishard is prosecuting the case, which was investigated by the FBI with assistance from the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Crownpoint Division.

Charges in indictments are only accusations, and criminal defendants are presumed

innocent unless proven guilty.

#

12-45