



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales*  
*District of New Mexico*

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**SHIPROCK MAN SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS FOR  
FEDERAL ASSAULT CONVICTION**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, a federal judge in Albuquerque sentenced **Aero Nez**, 23, of Shiprock, N.M., to 18 months of imprisonment for his federal assault conviction. Nez, a member of the Navajo Nation, will serve three years on supervised release after completing his prison sentence. He also was ordered to pay \$6654 in restitution.

Nez was arrested on a criminal complaint filed on May 13, 2011, and subsequently was charged in a four-count indictment alleging (1) abuse of a child under the age of 18; (2) assault resulting in serious bodily injury; (3) robbery; and (4) theft.

Court records reflect that, on March 27, 2011, the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety contacted the FBI after a 14 year old female child with a severe head injury was found in a canal near Indian Village in Shiprock. Several weeks later, after the child's medical condition improved, the child reported that Nez hit her and caused her to fall into the canal and then struck her with the leg of a metal chair because she refused to give him money for purchase alcohol. The child had \$30 in her possession at the time of the assault and did not know what happened to the money but assumed that Nez stole it following the assault.

Nez was arrested on May 18, 2011 and has been in federal custody since that time. On September 26, 2011, he entered a guilty plea to Count 2 of the indictment charging him with assault resulting in serious bodily injury. In entering his guilty plea, Nez admitted that, while

intoxicated, he came across the child near a drainage canal. He admitted that he assaulted the child by striking her atop of the head with a weapon that he picked up off of the ground, and that the child suffered serious bodily harm as a result.

Under the terms of Nez's plea agreement, the court dismissed Counts 1, 3 and 4 of the indictment after imposing sentence on Nez.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the case was investigated by the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, Shiprock Division, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack E. Burkhead.

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