



PRESS RELEASE

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**KOREAN COLLEGE STUDENTS PLEAD GUILTY TO
DEFACING EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT**

Defendants Pay \$29,782.62 to Repair Damage to Monument

ALBUQUERQUE – During separate hearings in federal court this afternoon, **Dana Choi**, 22, and **Seung Hoon Oh**, 23, entered guilty pleas to misdemeanor informations charging them with disturbing an archeological site, the El Morro National Monument, on October 13, 2011. At the time, Choi and Oh were foreign exchange students from South Korea who were studying at the University of New Mexico on student visas.

Choi and Oh entered their guilty pleas under plea agreements that required them to pay \$29,782.62 to the National Park Service (NPS) to cover the costs of repairing the damage they caused to the monument. Immediately after Choi and Oh entered their guilty pleas, the court sentenced them to no prison time and no fines, and enforced the restitution payment required by the plea agreements. Choi and Oh tendered the \$29,782.62 payment to the NPS during today's hearings.

According to court filings, on October 13, 2011, NPS employees at the El Morro National Monument discovered two names – “Super Duper Dana” and “Gabriel” – illegally carved into the sandstone cliffs of Inscription Rock, the monument's most prominent historical feature which includes engravings dating back to 1758. After ascertaining that the monument register for October 13, 2011, included an entry by a visitor who identified herself as Dana Choi from South Korea, a NPS ranger initiated an investigation. Through Facebook, the NPS ranger was able to identify the defendants, who subsequently were arrested on December 2, 2011 based on a criminal complaint.

The case was investigated by the NPS, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles L. Barth. The El Morro National Monument, which is operated by the NPS, U.S. Department of the Interior, is located 125 miles west of Albuquerque, N.M. The monument's

most significant feature is Inscription Rock, a soft sandstone monolith, rising 200 feet above the valley floor, on which are carved hundreds of inscriptions from early travelers. The monument also includes pre-Columbian petroglyphs and Pueblo Indian ruins. For more information about the El Morro National Monument, go to: <http://www.nps.gov/elmo/index.htm>.

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