
Press Release: The Hopi Tribe

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Illegal Trafficking

Kykotsmovi, Arizona--The Hopi Tribal Prosecutor's Office in coordination with the U.S. Attorney's Office filed charges against nine Hopi individuals for the illegal trafficking of Native American cultural items.

The charges stem from an undercover operation that involved the illegal sale of Hopi sacred items to an undercover Bureau of Indian Affairs agent.

The nine Hopi individuals charged are Edward Calnimptewa, Roberta Kayquaptewa, and Edgar Qumyintewa all from the village of Hotevilla; Dilbert Silas, Preston Ami, Merrill Sequi, Larson Chapella, Tyson Namoki, and Paul Pawytewa all from the First Mesa villages.

The Hopi Tribal Prosecutors Office has filed these charges under Hopi Tribal Ordinance 26, Section 3E, which speaks to the unlawful sale of ceremonial items. The penalty for this offense is a maximum of one year in jail and/or \$5000 fine. The illegal sale of sacred items is also a violation of Title 18 of the United States Code, titled the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

The black market of the Native American sacred items is a lucrative business, generating more than a million dollars in sales each year and involves an extensive network of buyers internationally.

Dorma Sahneyah, Hopi Tribal Prosecutor stated, "We want to send a message, that the Hopi people consider this a very serious crime and there will be consequences, whether it is natural consequences or serving time in jail."

Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma, Cultural Preservation Director for the Hopi Tribe, testified earlier this year in a similar case which resulted in a guilty verdict



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