



LaPaz County Narcotics  
Task Force



Drug Enforcement  
Administration



Colorado River Indian  
Tribes



U.S. Attorney's Office  
District of Arizona

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## MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL TASK FORCE TAKES DOWN METH DEALERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

***La Paz County Task Force arrests two on federal charges of dealing meth in Colorado River Indian Tribes. Four arrested on state drug charges. Meth, cash, vehicles seized.***

PHOENIX - In a combined sweep yesterday morning involving federal, state, local, and tribal police, two people were taken into federal custody, and one remained at large. All three are charged with dealing methamphetamine in the Colorado River Indian Tribes. The two in federal custody will be arraigned in federal court in Phoenix at 3:00 pm today. More arrests are expected in the coming week.

Four additional suspects were arrested on state drug charges, and three had outstanding warrants. All four suspects are in state custody. In the combined sweep, police seized approximately 375 grams of methamphetamine, more than \$99,000 cash, and four vehicles, including an agricultural hydraulic lift valued at approximately \$150,000. Two of the other vehicles seized contained hidden compartments frequently used to conceal drugs during transport.

Dennis K. Burke, U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona, stated: "Through unprecedented partnerships with tribal law enforcement, we are making major progress in preventing meth trafficking from taking hold on tribal lands. This investigation is a compelling example of that success. More to come."

Clorinda Lee Nopah, 61, of Parker, Ariz. was arrested by the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Police at her home early Wednesday. Rosie Cruz Leivas, 32, of Poston, Ariz. was arrested by tribal police at the Tribal Scales Office in Parker. Melody Stevens, 36, of Parker, Ariz. remained at large and police were still looking for her Thursday. All three are enrolled members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, and have been indicted on federal charges of dealing methamphetamine in Indian Country.

The first indictment alleges that Nopah committed three counts of possession of methamphetamine with the intent to distribute on tribal land in October 2009. A second indictment alleges Leivas, in September and October 2009, also possessed methamphetamine with the intent to distribute on three separate occasions. The third indictment alleges that in October 2009, Stevens possessed methamphetamine with the intent to distribute on the Indian reservation.

The partnership between the La Paz County Narcotics Task Force and the Colorado River Indian Tribes officially began in September 2009 pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement

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(IGA). Just five months later, these arrests and indictments mark the beginning of this combined effort to combat drug trafficking in Indian country.

For more than 16 months, the task force has focused its efforts on fighting methamphetamine distribution in Parker, Ariz., home to the Colorado River Indian Tribes. In the course of this investigation, it was believed that suspects were selling methamphetamine from the Tribal Farm Office, among other locations including the Scales Office, to members of the CRIT community.

The operation was dubbed “Alice in Wonderland” for the complex criminal jurisdiction in the CRIT community, which lies within federal, state, and tribal jurisdictions. Through the IGA with LaPaz County, the CRIT Police Department was able to tap federal resources from LaPaz County’s designation as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), the first tribal law enforcement agency in the United States to do so.

Richard M. Armstrong, Chief of Police of the Colorado River Indian Tribes stated: “Without the safety concern expressed by the Reservation Community and the support provided by Tribal Council in reviewing the complex jurisdictional and sovereignty concerns in approving the agreements, this interdiction effort would not have been realized. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our federal, state, and county law enforcement officials in supporting this effort.”

According to the 2008 Arizona Youth Survey, La Paz County was one of two counties in Arizona with the highest percentage of middle and high school age students saying they had used methamphetamine within the past 30 days.

“Methamphetamine is a destructive poison that can cause terrible harm to the quality of life in tribal communities,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Elizabeth W. Kempshall. “Side by side with our tribal and local law enforcement partners, DEA is holding meth dealers accountable. We are seizing their profits, shutting down their distribution networks, and putting dealers where they belong- behind bars. Today, the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation is a safer community due to the apprehension of the suspects involved in this investigation.”

A conviction for Possession with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine carries a maximum penalty of up to 40 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The La Paz County Narcotics Task Force consists of a partnership among the La Paz County Sheriff’s Office, the La Paz County Prosecutor’s Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Colorado River Indian Tribes Police Department, the Parker Police Department, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to investigate, arrest and seek prosecution of those responsible for distributing methamphetamine in Indian Country. The prosecution in this case is being handled by Jennifer E. Green, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER:           CR10-00169-EHC  
                                  CR10-00170-GMS  
                                  CR10-00171-DGC

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