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United States Attorney
Eastern District of Washington

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Career Offender on Federal Supervision Sentenced to More Than 25 Years in Prison for the Murder of a Yakama Nation Man

Yakima, WASHINGTON — First Assistant United States Attorney Pete Serrano announced that on July 13, Antonio Montellano, 44, was sentenced by Chief District Court Judge Stanley Bastain to 328 months in prison to be followed by five years of supervised release stemming from his murder conviction of a Yakama Nation man in January 2025.

Based upon information presented at the time of sentencing, Montellano was under federal supervision for his conviction of Importation of Cocaine and Methamphetamine in 2012 in the Southern District of California after serving an over 10-year prison sentence. Montellano's supervision was transferred to the Eastern District of Washington and specifically Yakima in 2023. In January 2025 while at the home of the victim, Montellano and the victim got into an argument. The defendant had been ingesting methamphetamine and had not slept for several days. Likely due to his drug usage and lack of sleep, Montellano acted impulsively in response to what he considered to be an inappropriate act. Montellano picked up a shovel and struck the victim in the head and continued to strike him after he had fallen to the ground. After the murder, Montellano covered the victim's body with a blanket, searched his home for surveillance cameras, took additional items and fled. During the late hours of January 28, 2025, the victim's family discovered his body.

Due to the quick investigative efforts of the Yakama Nation tribal police and FBI, they determined that the victim's new cellular phone was missing. The FBI called the victim's phone and Montellano answered the call. Montellano provided a fake name and lied about how he came into possession of the phone. Utilizing phone data and Flock camera footage, the FBI was able to identify Montellano as the primary suspect. Due to the egregious facts of the case, multiple citizens cooperated with law enforcement which greatly assisted the investigation. As the investigation progressed, the FBI learned that Montellano fled to California and then crossed the border into Mexico. Based upon the cooperative efforts between the Department of Justice and Mexican authorities, specifically Fuerza Estatal de Seguridad Ciudadana (FESC) in Baja California and the Instituto Nacional de Migracion (INM), Montellano, a U.S. citizen, was deported from Mexico to the United States. On June 10, 2025, the Grand Jury returned an indictment charging the defendant with Second Degree Murder. After Montellano was returned

to the United States from Mexico, he admitted to killing the victim. On November 4, 2025, Montellano pled guilty to Second Degree Murder.

The victim's family noted that he had a large family including several grandchildren that dearly missed his presence. Multiple family members and friends attended the sentencing hearing and addressed the court. The family's loss can never be made whole commenting on the tragic impact his senseless murder had on their family especially on those who found him that tragic morning. In imposing sentence, Chief District Court Judge Bastian noted Montellano's criminal history and the need for the court to impose a sentence to protect the public. The Court had concerns of the defendant's impulsive behavior which, in this case, led to the death of the victim.

First Assistant Pete Serrano stated, "Behind every senseless act of violence is a family member forever changed whose loss echoes far beyond the crime scene. Justice cannot restore a life lost to senseless violence, but it can confirm that every victim matters and that repeated criminal behavior has devastating consequences. I am thankful for the efforts of all involved to bring this repeat violent offender back to face his crimes."

"Not only did Mr. Montellano repeatedly attack the victim violently, but he also took steps to cover up the murder before fleeing the state and country," said Special Agent in Charge W. Mike Herrington of the FBI Seattle Field Office. "No matter how far a subject runs, the FBI will work diligently with our partners to bring them back to face justice."

The case was investigated by the Yakama Nation Tribal Police and the FBI and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Tom Hanlon.

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