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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES INDICTMENTS, ARRESTS IN SMUGGLING RING

Investigation conducted by NATIVE Task Force of tribal, federal law enforcement

SELLS, Ariz. – The Tohono O'odham Police Department announced today that a joint federal and tribal task force has moved to take down a major drug and human trafficking ring. After months of investigation, a dozen members of the suspected smuggling operation are now under arrest and indictments for four more have been filed in Pima County Superior Court.

The case was investigated by the NATIVE Task Force (Native American Targeted Investigations of Violent Enterprises), a new High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) initiative led by the Tohono O'odham Police Department and comprised of TOPD detectives and ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents.

The complex, two-month investigation uncovered an organization that was responsible for smuggling up to 600 kilograms of marijuana and 120 undocumented migrants per month through the Tohono O'odham Nation to Tucson. A review of financial information revealed that the primary defendant, Pauline Grijalva, laundered approximately \$350,000 in illicit proceeds through financial institutions during the three years immediately preceding this investigation. The task force seized 76 kilograms of marijuana, 8 motor vehicles, 2 ATVs, and \$17,000 in cash during the execution of three search warrants.

In addition to the arrest of Pauline Grijalva who is a U.S. citizen, the task force also made probable cause arrests of nine members of her suspected smuggling organization. Five of the suspects are U.S. citizens and four are undocumented Mexican nationals. On January 22, 2014, two additional suspected members of the smuggling ring, both U.S. citizens, were arrested as they were guiding a group of undocumented migrants around a U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint in Three Points, Ariz.

The indictment has 17 separate charges, including conducting a criminal enterprise, conspiracy to transport marijuana and to commit human smuggling, participating in a human smuggling organization, assisting a human smuggling organization, transporting marijuana for sale, human smuggling, money laundering in the first degree, and use of wire communications in organized crime and drug offenses.

“This case marks a very positive start for the NATIVE Task Force initiative and demonstrates what can be accomplished through multijurisdictional efforts,” said Malcolm Lewis, Director of the Tohono O'odham Department of Public Safety. *“The officers of the Tohono O'odham Police Department are committed to working closely with our law enforcement partners to prevent criminal conspiracies from threatening the safety and security of the Nation, Arizona and the U.S.”*

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