

Lame Deer woman sentenced to probation for lying about rape

By CLAIR JOHNSON - Of The Gazette Staff - 05/04/07 May 4, 2007

BILLINGS — A Lame Deer woman who admitted lying when she said federal law enforcement officers raped her will spend two years on federal probation.

Jennifer Marie Simpson Woodenlegs, 28, apologized Thursday and read to U.S. District Judge Richard Cebull a letter she is sending to the three men she accused.

“There are not words to express my shame, but I’m sorry,” she said.

Defense attorney Lisa Bazant sought a probationary sentence, saying Woodenlegs had been physically and sexually abused since she was a child and was in an abusive relationship with her common-law husband at the time of the allegations.

Woodenlegs and her husband had separated, and she had a relationship with another man that resulted in her getting pregnant, Bazant said. Woodenlegs also spent some time in jail.

Woodenlegs and her husband got back together and her husband figured out he was not the father, Bazant said. To avoid being beaten, Woodenlegs made up a story about getting raped by Bureau of Indian Affairs officers while in jail, she said. Woodenlegs has accepted responsibility and knows what she did was wrong, Bazant said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan Archer asked for a sentence of up to six months in prison.

“This was not merely a white lie,” he said. “It was a very elaborate lie with many details.”

Woodenlegs’ lie significantly affected the lives of three government officers, their jobs and their families, he said.

In ordering probation, Cebull noted Woodenlegs has done well while on release and is in counseling.

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“I think you’re getting another chance and you deserve it,” he said.

He ordered her to have no contact with the common-law husband.

Prosecutors said Woodenlegs was held at the BIA jail in Lame Deer in December 2004, January 2005 and again in March 2005. In March 2005 and again a month later, Woodenlegs alleged she had been raped by BIA officers while in the jail.

Two FBI agents interviewed Woodenlegs, who gave detailed and specific information and claimed she was raped multiple times by several officers. The officers denied the allegations.

The investigation turned up inconsistencies, and when the FBI talked to Woodenlegs again in October 2005, she admitted she had lied.

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