

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: December 17, 2007

Arpaio to Play Religious Music in All Jails Christmas Tree Erected in Jail

ACLU Warns Sheriff

(Phoenix, AZ) To celebrate the holiday season, traditional (and not so traditional) Christmas music and holiday hymns will fill the halls and cells of all five Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio's jails and Tent City beginning Monday, December 17, 2007.

From 6AM until 6PM in the evening, the Sheriff has ordered that inmates be allowed to listen to favorite Christmas tunes sung by numerous performers and played over the jails closed circuit system.

Arpaio personally picked some of the music from Alvin and Chipmunks Christmas Album to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir Sings holiday hymns and other holiday favorites from Bing Crosby to Doctor Demento.

"Even people in jail deserve a little Christmas cheer," Arpaio says.

The music should lighten up the jailhouse environment this Christmas season not only for the almost 10,000 inmates housed here but also for the many officers and deputies who work in the jails during the holidays, he says.

The Sheriff has also ordered that a fully decorated Christmas tree be placed in the entrance of the booking facility downtown where all police agencies bring their arrestees to be booked and processes.

Chief Legal Attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union in Phoenix, Dan Pochoda, advised the Sheriff's staff that Arpaio may be in violation of the inmates' constitutional rights and cited the rule of separation between church and state.

"They didn't complain last Christmas when we played the same type of music in the jails. What's changed since then?" Arpaio said.

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News Release

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