Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: April 4, 1966
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The Department of the Interior today announced that in response to a request from the Hopi Indian Tribal Council, it is directing the removal of about 35 Navajo Indians who are illegally residing within the Hopi Reservation in northern Arizona.

Assistant Secretary of Interior Harry R. Anderson instructed the Superintendent of the Hopi Agency, Clyde Pensoneau at Keams Canyon, Arizona, to serve the eviction notices on those Indians who did not comply with previous eviction notices of the Hopi Council.

The new eviction notices advise the Navajos that their failure to move will result in the matter being referred to the Attorney General for appropriate legal action.

The Hopi Reservation is an area to which the Hopi Tribe won undisputed ownership in a lawsuit brought by them against the Navajos. The Supreme Court affirmed the 1962 decision of the special Federal Court which tried the case. The Hopi area is surrounded by the Navajo Reservation.

Mr. Anderson said this action in honoring the Hopi request is in keeping with the Interior Department's trusteeship responsibilities.

"While this action is necessary," he said, "we will make every effort to prevent hardship on anyone. The decision of the Courts must be carried out, and I appeal to everyone concerned to cooperate responsibly in meeting this requirement.â

Assistant Secretary Anderson said the Bureau of Indian Affairs has instructed its Navajo Area Director, Graham Holmes, to organize a team to assist in the temporary relocation of the evicted Navajos. The team, including a social worker, will be present when the eviction notices are served.

The Hopi request to the Interior Department for assistance was contained in a letter signed by the Hopi Tribal Chairman, Dewey Healing, and three other Council members.

Chairman Healing noted that the Council adopted a resolution December 29, 1965, which gave the Navajos until April 1 to voluntarily leave the Hopi Reservation.

"The April 1 date â¦ is now at hand," Healing said, "and few, if any, of the Navajo Indians â¦ have departed. We are particularly anxious that the exercising of our legal rights shall not result in undue ill will or violence. In view of this fact," Healing continued, "we respectfully solicit your aid â¦"