Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today thanked President Trump for signing a Presidential Emergency Declaration for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which was hard hit by Hurricane Irma last week. The tribe made its request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as soon as it was able to do so. This is the first such declaration ever approved for a tribal nation according to FEMA.

"I want to thank President Trump for quickly responding to the Seminole Tribe's request for a Presidential Emergency Declaration to help it address the severe damage it suffered from Hurricane Irma," **Secretary Zinke said**. "The Interior Department and, specifically, the Bureau of Indian Affairs are actively working to provide the tribe with law enforcement and emergency services that will help fill in gaps in its own resources and supplement the assistance it receives from FEMA."

The declaration came with a surge of 75 volunteer officers from the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, various other Interior bureaus, and other Tribal Nations. Two dozen BIA and tribal officers remain this week to provide law enforcement and emergency services.

The Seminole Tribe is headquartered in the city of Hollywood, and is one of two federally recognized tribes in the state of Florida. The Tribe has tribal members on the Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton, Immokalee, Fort Pierce, Lakeland and Tampa Reservations as well as communities in Naples, Tamiami Trail, and around the central Florida area.

"To be able to have the relationship with the federal government to ensure the support and safety of all Seminole Tribe of Florida Reservations and our members is a testament to the relationship of two sovereign governments," **said Seminole Chairman Marcellus Osceola**. "I would like to thank President Donald Trump for his commitment to deploy all necessary resources to assist the Seminole Tribe of Florida during this difficult time."

"The President's fast response to the Seminole Tribe's request for an emergency declaration was critical for the tribe to receive the assistance it needs to recover from the effects of Hurricane Irma," **said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs John Tahsuda III**. "By specifically asking for BIA law enforcement personnel to help relieve the Seminole tribal police officers, who have been on duty for over a week straight, the declaration allows us to move forward quickly to render such assistance and protect lives and property."

With the President's action, the BIA's Office of Justice Services (OJS) will be able to provide law enforcement officers to support the Tribe under a Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) mission. The mission is being staffed by the BIA and supplemented by tribal and DOI law enforcement officers. The Bureau sent radio technicians to the site along with staff who delivered mobile sleeping quarters for mission personnel. BIA and other DOI Bureaus deployed 75 of the 125 personnel approved under the mission to support the Seminole Tribe at the Big Cypress, Brighton, Immokalee and Hollywood Reservations

The BIA's Emergency Management office is leading a Tribal Assistance Coordination Group (TAC-G),

which is responsible for coordinating emergency management actions of federal and state agencies, as well as volunteer organizations and other TAC-G partners, in support of tribes in Texas and Louisiana impacted by Hurricane Harvey and those impacted by Hurricane Irma.

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