Efforts helped lead to seizure of largest crop site in Washington State history

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WASHINGTON – Special Agents Craig Janis and Mario Redlegs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Law Enforcement Services (OLES) were recognized today by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for their efforts that helped lead to the eradication of a major marijuana cultivation site last year on the Yakama Nation Indian Reservation in Washington State. Janis, 34, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in Pine Ridge, S.D., and Redlegs, 38, of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in Fort Yates, N.D., were presented with awards by ONDCP Director John Walters at a ceremony here today.

“Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement personnel play a vital role in the detection, investigation and prosecution of drug crime in the United States,” said Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason. “I congratulate Special Agents Craig Janis and Mario Redlegs on being recognized for contributing to the successful completion of their mission.”

The marijuana crop, or “grow”, was the largest seized in Washington State history and the fourth largest in U.S. history. It consisted of 60,500 mature plants weighing approximately 30 tons with an estimated value of $35 million.

In August 2004, the BIA Division of Special Investigations’ Drug Enforcement Section initiated an investigation into marijuana cultivation taking place on the Yakama Reservation. Agents Redlegs and Janis were part of multi-agency effort led by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Yakima (Wash.) Resident Office and included personnel from the Yakama Nation Tribal Police, the local multi-jurisdictional L.E.A.D. (Law Enforcement Against Drugs) Task Force, Klickitat County Sheriff’s Department and the Washington State National Guard. The two agents hiked over tough terrain in adverse weather conditions to locate what was found to be numerous camp sites and collected crucial initial evidence that helped lead to several arrests. None of the suspects who were arrested as a result of this investigation were Yakama tribal members.

“This is only one example of how BIA officers work shoulder-to-shoulder with other Federal, tribal and local law enforcement offices and agencies,” said OLES Director Christopher B. Chaney. “Special Agents Redlegs and Janis exemplify the hard work, dedication and professionalism that are expected of BIA law enforcement personnel.”

The Office of Law Enforcement Services carries out its mission to improve law enforcement services and preserve public safety in Indian country through six district offices and by supporting, through funding and/or training, over 170 tribally operated police departments and directly operating 31 police departments, as well as funding 59 tribally operated detention facilities and directly operating 22 detention facilities, across the country, by coordinating homeland security support on Federal Indian

lands, by working cooperatively with other Federal and local law enforcement agencies in Indian country, and by providing training and professional development through the Indian Police Academy in Artesia, N.M.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, a component of the Executive Office of the President, was established by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. The principal purpose of ONDCP is to establish policies, priorities and objectives for the Nation’s drug control program. The goals of the program are to reduce illicit drug use, manufacturing and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences.

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