Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Interior Assistant Secretary Ken Smith today announced a major realignment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' administrative structure. The changes, he said, will improve management efficiency, reduce personnel in central and area offices by 20 percent and reduce overhead costs by $16 million in fiscal year 1983.

Smith said the administrative cuts, coupled with an increase of $55 million in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' 1983 budget request, will result in increased funding of programs at the reservation level.

In the reorganization, the present 12 area offices will be replaced with six regional service centers. The Bureau's education office will be streamlined and the size of the central office reduced.

Smith said the six regional service centers will be at Albuquerque, New Mexico; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Phoenix, Arizona; Portland, Oregon, and Rapid City, South Dakota. Smith added that plans for the immediate future also include a field office at Juneau, Alaska to serve the Alaska Natives and a Navajo Nation Service Center at Window Rock, Arizona.

In the realignment of the Bureau's education office, there will be regional field offices at Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, Phoenix and Portland. Each of these offices will be headed by an assistant education director with line authority and responsibility for education activities in his region. This plan complies with the mandates of Public Law 95-561, which stresses local community control of Indian schools under professional educators.

In the central office the education office will be consolidated into two divisions.

Smith said, "Indian leaders have repeatedly asked me to protect the funding for their reservation programs and to take needed budget cuts in administrative overhead. This is our response."

There will be continued discussion and consultation with tribal leaders, union officials and others in the implementation of the realignment, Smith said. He and other departmental officials this week briefed Indian leaders, Members of Congress, BIA field officials and employee union officials on the basic elements of the realignment.

Smith said the changes will cut red tape and costs and definitely improve the Bureau's management of Indian programs."

Further information about changes, Smith said, would be made available as implementation proceeds.

The Bureau now has area offices in Aberdeen, South Dakota; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Anadarko and Muskogee, Oklahoma; Billings, Montana; Juneau, Alaska; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Window Rock and Phoenix, Arizona; Portland, Oregon; Sacramento, California and Washington, D. C.