Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release: July 11, 1973
Print PDF

What is the status of follow-up actions at Wounded Knee?

Substantial losses were suffered by Indian residents of Wom1ded Knee during the 71-day occupation of the village.

Restoration efforts by the Bureau of Indian Affairs include:

1. Emergency housing for 20 Indian families and financing assistance for 56 Indian families.
2. Repair of 17 Indian homes.
3. Replacement of seven houses and six mobile homes.
4. Replacement of substantial quantities of hare furnishings, utensils, and appliances.
5. Replacement of one bridge and repair of four miles of highway. The cost of direct restoration work by BIA totals $375,000 exclusive.

In addition, the Oglala Sioux housing authority with emergency funds from HUD, is repairing damages to 12 public housing limits in the village. Legislation has been introduced to compensate non-Indian residents and ranchers for loss of crops, cattle, and personal possessions. Senators McGovern, and Curtis have introduced an amendment to a Small Business Act (S.1846) which would make restitution.

Since Wounded Knee what has been done about law enforcement training for Indians?

A total evaluation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement program is now underway, on a priority basis.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is now preparing a request for an amendment to the 1974 budget that will ask for more money for law enforcement efforts. If this amendment is passed, it will give the Bureau $9,827,000 more money to 'Work with in the area of judicial prevention and law enforcement than it had in 1973 (fiscal year).

Additional money for this same work will be requested for fiscal year 1975 and 1976.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is now developing a nationwide crowd control unit of 50 Indians. These are a highly select group trained by the Department of Justice to handle emergency situations. They are highly selected, all Indians, and are taken from various BIA police units on various reservations. They will be on call much as are the Indian firefighting units.

Police training has been made mandatory for all Federal officers on Indian reservations. In addition, police training is available for all police who are employed by Indian tribes on a priority basis, through the BIA Police Academy, Brigham City, Utah.

Status of prosecutions at Wounded Knee?

The Department of Justice has 91 indictments covering 117 defendants and the FBI is still

investigating.

No firm trial dates have been arrived at by the U.S. District Court for the District of South Dakota, headquarters at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the court which has jurisdiction. The lawyers for those indicted have presented a notion for a change of venue (a change as to where the trial will be held) because of pretrial publicity.

Justice says the lawyers for the defendants contend they cannot get a fair trial in North, South

Dakota, or Nebraska and would like the trial moved to say, New York City. A change of venue generally means merely a change to an adjoining district but the longest distance in Justice Records has been £ran Boston to San Francisco. AIM leaders Banks, Means, Bullecourt, Camp, Bissonette, and others have been indicted for burglary, larceny, impeding Federal officers during a civil disorder, conspiracy, assaulting a Federal officer, and possession of unregistered firearms. Penalties for each go up to five years.

Two hundred and eighty-seven persons were arrested in connection with the occupation of Wounded Knee, and most were charged with interfering with law enforcement officers in the performance of their duty because of a civil disorder. This has to do with interstate commerce and is according to U.S. Code 18, Sec. 231. Fifty-two charges were dropped even before the people were brought before a magistrate. Two hundred thirty-five people have appeared before the Federal magistrate.

What is the status of pyramid lake situation?

On September 22, 1972, the Solicitor General filed an original complaint in the Supreme Court on behalf of the United States against the states of Nevada and California. In its complaint the U.S. Government asked that a: "decree be entered declaring the right of the United States for the benefit of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe of Indians to the use of sufficient waters of the Truckee River to fulfill the purposes for which the Pyramid Lake Reservation was created, including the maintenance and preservation of Pyramid Lake and the maintenance of the lower reaches of the Truckee River as a natural spawning ground for fish and other purposes beneficial to and satisfying such use to be with a priority of November 29, 1859."

On June 11, 1973, the Supreme Court declined to hear United States of America v. States of Nevada and California. The Supreme Court suggested that a suit be filed in a local district court in Nevada. On June 20, 1973, the Interior Department requested the Justice Department to file a suit in the Nevada district court and, if necessary, also in the California district court to assert the same rights as presented to the Supreme Court.

The Justice Department has indicated that the suit will be filed within 60 days (by August 20th).