Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Tara Katuk Sweeney praised the seizure of over $400,000 in high-grade marijuana made by a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) – Office of Justice Services (OJS) K9 unit during a traffic stop. On April 6, 2019, a BIA-OJS K9 officer, serving as part of the OJS Division of Drug Enforcement (DDE), seized over 81 pounds of the high-grade marijuana within the exterior boundaries of the Laguna Pueblo on Interstate 40 in New Mexico. The seizure comes on the heels of another successful criminal interdiction operation that resulted in the seizure of an estimated $2.3 million worth of illegal drugs.

"I want to thank the Office of Justice Services and its officers for their continual dedication and vigilance that are so vital to keeping Indian Country communities safe," **said Assistant Secretary Sweeney**. "The police work of this officer and his K9 partner that resulted in the discovery of such a large cache of high-grade marijuana exemplifies the expertise and training of all our BIA law enforcement officers. Congratulations on a job well done."

"As a nation, we cannot thank our BIA law enforcement officers enough for their continued commitment to keeping our communities drug free and for working hard to fulfill President Trump's call to action to combat the opioid crisis," **said John Tahsuda, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs**. "This drug seizure, as well as the many other interdiction operations so far this year, demonstrates their commitment is both tireless and selfless."

The BIA-OJS K9 officer stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation. Upon contact with the driver, the officer detected an odor of marijuana emitting from the vehicle. The officer conducted a probable cause search of the vehicle based on the odor of marijuana and located several plastic parcels containing processed high-grade marijuana equaling to 37,036 grams (81.65 pounds). The marijuana seized was later determined to be high-grade Sensimilla marijuana, which is of greater potency, and has a higher street value, than marijuana from domestic sources or that smuggled into the United States from sources in Mexico.

The Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversee the programs of the BIA and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs - Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS) funds law enforcement, corrections, and court services to support safe tribal communities. These programs safeguard life and property, enforce laws, maintain justice and order, and ensure detained American Indian offenders are held in safe, secure, and humane environments. The OJS also provides technical assistance to tribes to amend tribal legal codes consistent with the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), as reauthorized in 2019. In addition, the BIA is implementing training for direct service law enforcement program staff in the areas of law enforcement, social services, victim services, and courts, and is making this training available to tribes operating these programs under self-determination contracts and compacts.

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