Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – The Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs is announcing a corrected schedule of dates for the upcoming openings of Missing and Murdered Native Americans Cold Case Task Force offices in August.

The correct dates with locations are:

- Tuesday, August 4, 2020: Rapid City, South Dakota
- Thursday, August 6, 2020: Billings, Montana
- Tuesday, August 11, 2020: Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Thursday, August 13, 2020: Phoenix, Arizona
- Wednesday, August 26, 2020: Anchorage, Alaska

The first office to open was on July 27, 2020, in Bloomington, Minnesota.

President Trump's Executive Order established the Operation Lady Justice Task Force, a multi-agency effort co-chaired by Secretary Bernhardt and U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr. Its purpose is to enhance the operation of the criminal justice system and address the staggering number of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Natives in tribal communities.

The Cold Case Task Forces are in accordance with Executive Order 13898 which President Trump signed on November 26, 2019, to address this crisis. They will be staffed with law enforcement personnel and newly appointed special agents from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS), along with personnel from other Operation Lady Justice Task Force partners including tribal law enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Offices of the U.S. Attorneys.

A way for top federal officials to engage, coordinate and work with tribal governments on developing strategies to address the crisis, the Operation Lady Justice Task Force is working to collect and manage data across jurisdictions; establish protocols for new and unsolved cases; establish multi-jurisdictional cold case teams; improve the response to investigative challenges; and provide clarity on the roles, authorities and jurisdiction for those involved. It is also charged with providing a report to the President of its work and accomplishments in meeting the executive order’s mandate.

Preventing further violence against American Indians and Alaska Natives is largely predicated on ending illicit drug activities and sex trafficking. The BIA-OJS and its partners have opened 200 percent more drug cases across Indian Country than in the last year of the Obama Administration, and their tribal law enforcement officers have seized approximately 6,000 pounds of narcotics worth $30 million in the past two years.

The BIA-OJS's partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice’s Missing and Unidentified Persons System, known as NamUs, has led to the development and implementation of new tribal-affiliation data fields to assist law enforcement with capturing information to track missing and murdered persons in Indian Country. Since the addition of these new data fields last year, there has been a 60 percent

increase in Native-person entries into the system.

CREDENTIALS: These events will be open to working media representatives, who are required to display sanctioned media credentials for admittance.

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