Law enforcement officers are vital to supporting President Trump's efforts to prevent drugs from crossing our borders and into our Native communities.

Media Contact: NewsMedia@bia.gov
For Immediate Release: August 11, 2020
Print PDF

Originally Published by: The Federalist

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The prevalence of violence, drugs, and illicit activities disproportionately affects Indian Country and Alaska Native villages. Using the tools at his disposal, President Trump is working alongside American Indians and Alaska Natives to change that. Genuine strides are being made to make these communities safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

As the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior and an Alaska Native, I am familiar with the issues affecting so many around our country. I also have the pleasure of serving on the Operation Lady Justice Task Force established by President Trump's November 26, 2019, executive order, which renews federal efforts to support and protect Native American women and children.

In these capacities, I have come to appreciate and deeply respect our mission at Indian Affairs — particularly our law enforcement officers, who are on the front lines supporting the president's efforts to prevent drugs from crossing our borders and into our Native communities.

The Office of Justice Services within the Bureau of Indian Affairs carries out this critical work through its law enforcement and tribal courts programs that interact daily with scores of tribal communities across America and in tandem with tribal, state, local, and other federal law enforcement agencies. Their combined efforts serve tribal self-determination by helping tribal governments protect their sovereignty from being undermined by criminal enterprises.

The OJS and its partners help tribal leaders and members combat illicit drug activities that afflict their communities, as well as bring aid and comfort to the victims of the violent crimes that result from drug-dealing and substance abuse. One way has been to increase detection and investigation of drug trafficking in and around tribal communities through increased training of law enforcement and tribal court personnel, and by raising community awareness.

Created in March 2018 to combat the opioid crisis in tribal communities, the Interior's Joint Opioid Reduction Task Force implemented a general plan to dismantle and disrupt opioid and heroin distribution networks in Indian Country by identifying individuals involved in the transportation, sale, distribution, and use of illegal opioids. Since then, the Task Force has made great strides in disrupting and taking down drug-trafficking networks while bringing their operators to justice.

To date, the Task Force has made more than 840 arrests and seized more than three tons of illegal narcotics with an estimated street value of more than $32 million — successful operations that have made the Task Force a model for other law enforcement agencies. Numerous operations have taken place around the country in states including Arizona, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Nevada, and Washington.

No administration in recent history has made such a vigorous investment of resources into combatting drug-related crime in Indian Country, both through the Task Force and by assisting tribal law enforcement programs. As a result, in 2019, the number of drug cases opened across all Indian Country law enforcement was approximately 26 percent higher than in 2018 and *more than 200 percent* higher than in the last year of the previous administration.

Another way the OJS is striving to make tribal communities safer is through drug training for BIA law enforcement personnel, including Indian Police Academy cadets, patrol officers, and criminal investigators. Since 2018, more than 1,200 men and women have been trained in all aspects of drug detection and investigation, ranging from drug awareness and identification to evidence collection and drug lab recognition to surveillance and officer safety.

Complementing the training for law enforcement is the OJS's community-based training for service providers and tribal members to educate them on the identification and effects of opioids, heroin, and Fentanyl, causes of overdoses, combatting opioids and heroin at the community level, and investigating and prosecuting drug cases. From 2018 through today, the OJS has held more than 100 opioid community awareness and training events, with more than 2,000 attendees from almost 40 tribes who are now better equipped to help combat the influence of opioids and other illicit drugs in their areas.

Cold cases also present one of the most daunting challenges for any police force, but especially for Indian Country law enforcement. The White House's Operation Lady Justice Task Force has made addressing this issue a priority. One of the most glaring obstacles to solving cold cases in Indian Country has been the lack of a national database that captures and tracks missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native persons.

In 2018, the OJS partnered with the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, the national information clearinghouse and resource center for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed person cases across the United States (known as NamUs). New data fields have been created for tribal affiliation to aid in identifying American Indian and Alaska Native missing and murdered victims.

This year, the OJS has identified seven locations where cold case task forces will be established: Anchorage, Alaska; Billings, Montana; Rapid City, South Dakota; Bloomington, Minnesota; Nashville, Tennessee; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Phoenix, Arizona. They will be staffed by newly created special agents from the OJS, as well as task force partners including tribal officers and individuals from the FBI and the offices of U.S. attorneys.

Under President Trump's leadership, through the Operation Lady Justice and the Joint Opioid Reduction Task Forces, we are making real progress towards making tribal communities safer for everyone. There is still much more to do. We continue to work with the U.S. Department of Justice and our other law enforcement partners, to combat drug trafficking and substance abuse and bring justice to Native crime victims and their families.

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