Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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**SELLS, Ariz**. – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin today announced that President Bush has requested $1.4 million for Fiscal Year 2005 to support border security efforts of the Tohono O'odham Nation, whose reservation in southern Arizona shares a 75-mile border with Mexico. The President's request will help the tribe address law enforcement border issues on the Tohono O'Odham Nation reservation as part of the administration's efforts to improve homeland security in Indian Country. Martin made the announcement during a tour of the reservation to see first-hand the problems faced by the tribe in protecting its portion of the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The needs of the Tohono O'odham Nation are significant and supported by a substantial investment," Martin said. "Today's tour has shown me the magnitude of this problem and justifies our request for funds."

For years Tohono O'odham tribal members have struggled with the costs associated with trying to curtail the increasing levels of illegal immigration and drug trafficking through their reservation. Such costs include devoting limited tribal resources on border enforcement and to combating robberies against tribal members, as well as providing health care and autopsy services to illegal immigrants and dealing with increased environmental pollution from the litter and waste left behind. Approximately 1,500 illegal immigrants cross the Tohono O'odham Nation reservation daily.

In 2002, there were 71,700 reported incidents of illegal immigrant apprehension and contacts in Indian Country with most of those reported by the Tohono O'odham Nation. That year, Tohono O'odham Nation police seized 65,000 pounds of illegal narcotics. In 2003, over 100,000 pounds were confiscated by tribal law enforcement.

The tribe currently has 69 commissioned officers serving the 2.8 million-acre reservation, which has become the route of choice in Arizona for thousands of drug and immigrant smugglers seeking easy entry into the United States. The President's request will fund additional tribal police officers, and related costs, to concentrate on border criminal activities and assist federal, state and local authorities in coordinating efforts to resolve cross-jurisdictional issues on the Tohono O'odham Nation reservation.