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--First of all, I don't think I have to tell you that there has literally been an explosion in Indian gaming during the last one to two years. No one -- not Congress, Interior, BIA, the Indian people, or anyone else anticipated this tremendous growth. The 1988 legislation did not provide for a time period after it became law for all the safeguards and rules and regulations to be put into place. Neither did it provide time for anyone to hire the necessary expertise to monitor all the things for which we were given the responsibility.

--This particular audit took place earlier this year, but monitored activities that had taken place over the past several years. Most of the things pointed out in the audit -- with the exception of all of the unapproved tribal-state compacts -- have been corrected.

-Let me also point out that the audit covers a time period when the Bureau was in process of creating an Indian Gaming Management Office and hiring personnel to staff it. The Bureau was also working closely with the National Indian Gaming Commission to spell out the responsibilities we had, and to learn when the Commission would be in a position to assume the responsibilities that the Act assigned it. The Audit report fully points out that the Commission did not consider itself fully operational until February of 1993.

--With that aside, I must emphasize as I pointed out in the audit report, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau pay "great deference" to tribal views and concerns. We also pointed out that the "striking feature" of the current debate over Indian gaming is the lack of deference to tribal views and positions.

--Having said that, I remind you that these are responsible elected tribal government officials who are signing the contracts and tribal-state compacts discussed in the Audit report. We call it self-determination -- sovereignty -- self-governance, autonomy. Neither the Bureau nor the Commission will ever and we should not -- be at the elbow of a tribal chairperson when he or she signs legitimate contracts whether they be for gaming management or whatever.

--Tribal chairmen and tribal governments have to assume the responsibility for their actions and they must be held accountable. That does not mean that the Bureau will step away and shirk any of its responsibilities. We are necessarily limited in "protecting" the tribes and that is the way it ought to be if tribal self-determination and self-governance are going to work.

--One more thing -- the Inspector General's report does not bear out what the critics of Indian Gaming have been shouting for years -- that Indian gaming is rife with organized crime. The FBI has been saying for years there is no evidence to support such claims. The report does prove that Indian tribes have to be more diligent in policing their own employees to prevent such theft and embezzlement as pointed out in the report.