Media Contact: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
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I regret that there has been a loss of life on the Navajo reservation. This loss of life has come about as the Navajo police defended themselves against an attack by demonstrators at the Navajo Tribal Government Headquarters.

Let me make it clear that the Navajo tribal police are in charge on the reservation and things are calm at this time. At the request of the Navajo Director of Public Safety, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has sent a small contingent of police officers to Window Rock. The BIA police are on standby and are not currently involved in any law enforcement activity on the reservation.

I want it clearly understood that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is simply in a support role at this time. The Navajo tribal government and their police are in charge. BIA police will assist them at their request. During the recent change in control of the tribal government, the BIA has remained in the background and let the system set up by the Navajo people decide its leaders. The system has worked. We will continue to remain in the background on the current situation until we are asked by those in charge of the Navajo government to assist them in whatever way we can.

My condolences go out to the Navajo families of the men who died last night. And I want the Navajo people on the reservation to know that their police are in charge and they can be assured that order will be maintained on the reservation. We stand ready to assist the government when asked.