

**TESTIMONY
OF
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INDIAN AFFAIRS
TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
ON
OPERATION DAKOTA PEACEKEEPER**

AUGUST 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am pleased to provide testimony for the Department of the Interior, regarding “Operation Dakota Peacekeeper.”

The Standing Rock Indian Reservation consists of 2.3 million acres and spans portions of North and South Dakota. Crime on the Standing Rock Reservation occurs at an alarming rate—approximately six times the national average. The tribal leadership of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe requested additional police presence to reduce the violence and ensure peace and order in the Reservation’s eight communities. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) provides primary law enforcement services.

Operation Dakota Peacekeeper is consistent with Secretary Kempthorne’s “Safe Indian Communities Initiative” to combat crime within Indian country. The key objectives of Operation Dakota Peacekeeper are to reduce crime, target illegal drug activities, provide investigations support to prosecute domestic violence offenses and crimes against children.

The mission of the operation is to deploy additional personnel to the Standing Rock Reservation and use community-policing tactics to carry out the operation. The additional personnel are on detail from other BIA and Tribal Police Departments across the country. We are grateful for the sacrifices and individual contributions made by the officers and their home organizations. The teams made up of these officers provide patrol and investigative services as needed. They provide proactive law enforcement presence, implement contingency plans to provide continuing law enforcement, assist local governments and law enforcement agencies, and provide additional support to criminal investigations by utilizing special agents assigned to the deployment team.

The Standing Rock community also plays a vital role in the success of the Operation. We are working with community and tribal leaders to sponsor community events, develop crime fighting strategies, community watch practices, out reach on drug education and prevention, increase patrol in high crime areas, and foster safe community practices.

Additionally, we have provided additional funding to the tribal court to deal with the case load generated by the arrests.

Overall, the Operation will assist the BIA in developing future strategies to promote safer Indian communities within Indian Country. We are seeing results and will continue to review the progress being made on the Reservation. We will continue to work closely with the Committee and the Tribe on this important operation. I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have.