



**Chairman Frank White Clay  
Crow Tribe of Indians  
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE UNITED STATES HOUSE  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**July 22, 2024**

**Examining the Trump Administration's Work Combatting Transnational Cartels in Indian Country  
| Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**I. Introduction**

Thank you, Chair and Members of the Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee, for the opportunity to appear today. The Crow Reservation, like many tribal lands, has become an unwitting corridor for transnational cartels. I am here seeking your partnership to secure our people and uphold our sovereignty.

**II. The Crow Tribe of Indians**

**People & History.** The Apsáalooke (Crow) people have inhabited the Yellowstone River Valley in south-central Montana for millennia. Our reservation was established by treaty in 1851 (and modified through subsequent agreements). Today the Crow Reservation spans approximately 2.3 million acres of plains, river breaks, and foothills. As the elected Chairman, I represent over 13,000 enrolled members. Key priorities include public safety, economic opportunity, and cultural preservation.

**III. Cartel Activity on Tribal Lands**

The Reservation's vast terrain, remote roadways, and sparse law-enforcement presence make it an attractive smuggling route. Combined with limited economic opportunities, this creates a perfect storm for the predatory behaviors of cartels and organized crime.

Over the past several years, law enforcement has seized record quantities of meth and fentanyl on the Crow Reservation. While meth and fentanyl distribution impacts all of Montana, these

drugs continue to disproportionately devastate Indian Country. Our people bear the human toll: addiction, violent crime, and community trauma.

#### IV. Crow Reservation Financial Strain & Crime Nexus

The Crow Tribe's funding shortfalls have severely constrained our capacity to secure the Reservation and support at-risk families. As I have testified before, the expedited closure of our mine, coupled with our mistaken placement on a "Do Not Pay" list, has negatively impacted our community. The mine's closure significantly increased our unemployment rate and reduced tribal revenue. By being unfairly added to that list, we also lost countless grant opportunities.

The consequences are substantial and multifaceted:

- Fewer Tribal officers on patrol, leading to delayed response times for drug and weapons interdiction.
- Cuts to social-service programs, increasing vulnerability to cartel recruitment and substance misuse.

Cartels are drawn not only to the wide-open spaces of our Reservation but also to the void created by budget limits and the desperation caused by joblessness and poverty.

I want to thank this Committee for passing the Crow Revenue Act in a bipartisan manner. Once signed into law, the Crow Tribe will again have the resources needed to protect our people, care for those in need, and invest in economic development so our members can pursue better opportunities.

#### V. Actions Taken by the Trump Administration

In January of this year, President Trump issued an Executive Order creating a formal process to designate international cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) under existing statutes (INA § 219; IEEPA; EO 13224). This recognizes cartels' convergence with insurgent-style tactics, state actors, and terrorist groups across the Western Hemisphere, and declares their violence, assassinations, and trafficking "pose an unacceptable national security risk."

This action opened the door for enhanced enforcement tools: asset freezes on designated entities; prohibition on all U.S. transactions with FTOs and SDGTs; and expanded authorities for Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to interdict cartel networks.

The Executive Order's additional funding and operational emphasis enable DOJ and DHS to channel more resources into under-patrolled jurisdictions, including Indian Country. It also authorizes cross-designation under multiple statutes, paving the way for coordinated tribal task forces with federal agents.

Having seen firsthand the cost these cartels inflict on my people, I thank the Administration for taking these steps. Cutting off funding avenues and redirecting resources to recognize the actual threat were much-needed measures to combat the cartels' foothold on tribal lands.

I conclude that by leveraging the robust tools authorized in the Executive Order—and ensuring that the Crow Tribe and all tribal nations have direct access to those resources—we can stem the tide of cartel violence, restore safety, and uphold tribal sovereignty.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.