

July 22nd Testimony from Stacy Zinn

Since 2014, I, Stacy Zinn, have been affiliated with the Native American Community located in Montana. I was formally the Resident Agent in Charge for the entire state of Montana between 2018 through 2023 and prior to that, I was a Group Supervisor for the Eastern District of MT. Since mandatory retirement, I have continued to liaison with the Native American Community and I still give free drug and cartel presentations to them for educational purposes. Because I have been a proactive face to some, they will share some things with me pertaining to the happenings taken place on the reservations and the surrounding areas. A topic of contention for the Native American Community is their fight against the cartels, foreign gang members and the drug flow into their communities. This fight is constant due to the overwhelming drug use taking place within their communities.

HISTORY: When I transferred to Montana, I learned the Sinaloa Cartel had slowly developed relationships with individuals living on the reservations. Cartel members would coordinate with local drug distributors, arrange for a shipment of drugs to arrive via ground transportation and quickly distribute the drugs while picking up bulk currency. Drivers would be rotated after their Montana assignment to keep law enforcement from being able to identify the them. What attracted the cartel to the reservations was the profits they would make from the sale of drugs compared to the profits they would make in places such as Denver or Spokane. Methamphetamine sales netted an approximate 30% profit but it wasn't until the fake fentanyl pills came on scene when law enforcement saw the street price skyrocket. The cost to make these pills are approximately .4 cents to .25 cents. For several years, law enforcement has seen fake pills sale as high as \$100.00 on one particular reservation and they are just now seeing the prices drop. With a lack of law enforcement at all levels within the state and huge profits to be made, the cartels started exploiting the Native American communities because once one becomes addictive to opiates it is hard to just walk away and the Cartel members know this.

After the fall of Chapo Guzman, the head of the Sinaloa Cartel, his sons, Los Chapitos, took over half of the cartel while Chapo's long-time partner and former member of the original Federation Ismael Zambada aka, "El Mayo" took over the other half. Los Chapitos would bring change to their method of drug trafficking by mailing fentanyl pills to the cities in Montana and then have local distributors distribute to the reservations. However, they took some hits when law enforcement was able to disrupt some of their activities in southwestern Montana.

In 2022, it was learned that a 'cartel' believed to be CJNG was physically moving onto the Crow Reservation. This relationship was established between the cartel and members of a particular

family that traveled between Crow and Washington. After learning of the illegal activities on Crow, I directed my Billings team to focus all of their efforts on this investigation since we had not seen this type of overt actions taking place by the cartels. DEA, along with FBI and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), teamed up and started a long-term investigation. The investigation centered on the Crow Indian Reservation, but also impacted Northern Cheyenne Reservation, Ft. Belknap Reservation, Rocky Boy Reservation, Flathead Reservation and the city of Billings. Meanwhile DEA offices in Washington simultaneously investigated the stash location of the alleged CJNG, located near a Washington reservation. Ultimately, Montana's investigation led to 27 convictions and the seizures of both cash and drugs. It was learned not only was the cartel providing drugs to their Montana customers, they were also trading drugs for guns which were transported out of Montana.

During the above investigation, Montana law enforcement saw the impact of open borders. Members of the identified Mexican cell consisted of those that had come across illegally over the southwest border. Some would also cross into Canada and return back into the USA. This is a true scenario where the open borders were allowing crime and illegal substances to flow across the border and into our communities, impacting the vulnerable.

Since the end of 2024, the Trump administration has been engaged with rectifying the criminal situation within our country and this has inadvertently impacted Montana's Indian Country and has been giving more resources to law enforcement. By closing the SW border and being proactive in targeting illegals with criminal records law enforcement has been able to actively conduct raids on those that are harming the communities. This has disrupted the normal drug flow onto certain reservations. The recent pressures placed on the Sinaloa's leadership and the vacuum of the CJNG physical presence on the reservations has given the tribal community a much-needed pause. However, this has not completely stopped the flow of drugs in an already ravished area. A lack of law enforcement at both the local and federal level is still an issue. BIA uniform officers and investigators are still lacking in their numbers and this has been an ongoing frustration for all parties involved. The hiring methods of BIA candidates is an issue. With budget constraints hampering them, they are also struggling with the prioritization of hiring of Native Americans and the long, drawn-out background checks and training. This sometimes led to an eighteen-month or longer process which is too long for an agency that is in need of officers.

Another issue the reservations faces is the lack of jail space. The overcrowding of jails is allowing criminals to continue to walk the streets and in turn this is leading to more crime being committed. Federal agencies such as the DEA and FBI are limited in their resources and while DEA will do a concentrated effort for a short period of time of physically conducting operations on the reservations, criminals have the advantage to just waiting them out until the operations

are completed and then it is back to their criminal business. This is why the continuous presence of law enforcement is important in order to establish relationships on the reservations and to thwart criminal activities. It should be noted that approximately four Safe Trails Task Force are allotted for four separate areas that will impact the reservations. However, I caution, if no extra manpower is brought in from out of state, then this will take manpower away from another area in Montana that probably needs the same attention.

Other positive actions that have taken place since the current administration took office, has been the bringing back former U.S. Attorney Kurt Alme, who knows Montana and Indian Country well. A strong advocate for wanting to rid the criminal element off the reservations signals to law enforcement to place more emphasis on Indian Country. Last, nominating 'tough on crime judges' who will impose firm and consistent sentences according to the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which President Trump has recently done, will help combat the soft on crime attitudes we have previously seen.

In conclusion, I applaud the Trump Administration's current efforts in keeping our communities safe. While the cartel, gang members and foreign bad actors have the current advantage, just knowing that law enforcement has a strong supporter in the White House and is placing key leadership in agencies that are supporting law enforcement is a huge boost to moral. While there is still more work to be done, I feel that we are heading in the right direction. God Bless.