

Justice to boost effort to combat tribal crime

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — On just a single day this year on the Red Lake reservation in northern Minnesota, police and investigators received emergency calls about a suicide, a murder, three stabbings, two shootings and multiple incidents of domestic violence.

Federal statistics have shown American Indians are the victims of violent crime at more than twice the national rate, with incidence of homicide and domestic violence much higher than the national average.

The Obama administration announced last week a new effort to try and combat some of this crime on reservations, where shortages of law enforcement personnel and federal dollars have led to lawless environments.

The top three Justice Department officials — Attorney General Eric Holder, Deputy Attorney General David Ogden and Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli — will travel to states with high Indian popula-

tions over the next two months to talk to tribal members and crime experts about what can be done.

“It translates into suffering in people’s lives that just is unacceptable in this country,” Ogden said. “We’re really at kind of a crisis point.”

The problems are not new. In the 1990s, Holder, Ogden and Perrelli all worked on Indian crime for then-Attorney General Janet Reno in the Clinton administration.

Many of the same issues still exist, including limited resources, a lack of coordination among agencies and little focus on the issue.

“We have to look at whether we’re doing enough and I think it’s clear we’re not,” Ogden said. “I think we can devote more law enforcement agents, I think we can help in the training of law enforcement agents, we can have more prosecutors and I think we can provide more support to tribal institutions.”

Increased federal dollars will

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probably also be part of the equation, Ogden said.

Reports of violence on reservations — especially the poorest and most remote — are constant. Red Lake has certainly known its share of crimes. In 2005, a 16-year-old there killed seven people at his school and two people on the reservation.

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Still, little is known about what exactly is happening on reservations or how the incidents are handled. Data has been sparse for decades and crime surveys rarely separate out

tribal statistics. Ogden says better data collection is one of the department’s priorities.

One of the main problems in reducing crime has been a lack of officers; often a handful of patrol cars will police a reservation the size of a small state.

The issue of jurisdiction has also long been an obstacle. The Justice Department shares responsibility for Indian crime with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is part of the Department of Interior, and with state and tribal governments. Jurisdiction over a crime can vary by state, by the severity of the crime and by whether the victim and suspect are Indian or non-Indian.

While the Bureau of Indian Affairs polices reservations, the Justice Department’s role involves investigating and prosecuting crimes that fall under federal jurisdiction and administering grant programs designed to reduce crime on reservations.

Democrats in Congress criti-

cized the Bush administration for not doing more to address the problem and for declining to prosecute many crimes in Indian country. While campaigning on Indian reservations last year during the Democratic primary, Barack Obama promised more protections for tribes, including efforts to improve law enforcement.

Ogden says the government has failed to provide adequate resources and basic protections.

“All kinds of crime flourish in that environment,” he said. “There hasn’t been enough sustained leadership attention.”

Ogden and Perrelli will attend two sessions with tribal leaders and experts in law enforcement in late August in Seattle and in September in Albuquerque, N.M.

In October, Holder will hold a larger listening conference with tribes in Minneapolis. It’s the first such conference since the Clinton administration held a similar session 15 years ago, according to the department.

Interior secretary outlines priorities

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. (AP) — Interior Secretary Kenneth Salazar met with Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. last week.

Salazar told Shirley and other Navajo leaders the Obama administration’s major goals in working with Indian tribes include improving education, law enforcement, and economic development.

Shirley spokesman George Hardeen says the president and Salazar were joined by tribal branch chiefs and senior Interior Department officials in Window Rock.

The tribe also honored Interior Department Solicitor Hilary Tompkins, a tribe member who has previously served as chief counsel to New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson.

Salazar then toured the site of a proposed copper mine in Superior, Ariz. and the Grand Canyon.

Peltier denied parole

BISMARCK, North Dakota (AP) — American Indian activist Leonard Peltier, imprisoned since 1977 for the deaths of two FBI agents, has been denied parole after authorities decided that releasing him would diminish the seriousness of his crime, a federal prosecutor said last week.

Peltier, who claims the FBI framed him, will not be eligible for parole again until July 2024, when he will be 79 years old.

U.S. Attorney Drew Wrigley announced the decision of the U.S. Parole Commission.

Peltier is serving two life sentences for the execution-style deaths of FBI agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams during a June 26, 1975, standoff on South Dakota’s Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He was convicted in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1977.

He has said the FBI framed him, which the agency denies, and unsuccessfully appealed his conviction numerous times. He also was denied parole in 1993.

“Leonard Peltier is exactly

where he belongs — in federal prison, serving two life sentences,” said Wrigley.

An angry defense attorney Eric Seitz declined to comment last week, saying the Parole Commission had not had the “courtesy” to inform him of the decision. “We’ve heard nothing,” he said.

Parole Commission spokesman Tom Hutchison said the board notifies both sides of a decision, and can’t control whether one party makes it public before the other can be notified.

Peltier had a full parole hearing for the first time in 15 years last month at the Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, federal prison where he is being held.

The hearing was closed to the public, but Seitz said he focused on factors that would support parole. He said a representative from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa reservation in North Dakota, where Peltier grew up, said the tribe had made arrangements to incorporate Peltier back into society should he be paroled.

Judge quashes county casino suit

WAYLAND TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit challenging the U.S. Department of the Interior’s decision to take into trust 147 acres of land in southwestern Michigan where an American Indian tribe wants to build a casino.

U.S. District Judge Richard

Leon in Washington issued the ruling Wednesday.

The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomis Indians, also known as the Gun Lake Tribe, plans to build the \$200 million casino complex in Allegan County’s Wayland Township.

The land first had been taken

into trust, which the Interior Department did earlier this year.

Former Wayland Township trustee David Patchak sued to stop the land from being taken into trust in August 2008.

A proclamation was signed this month formally making the land a reservation.

Tribes, shellfish growers differ over exempt land

SEATTLE (AP) — A landmark deal struck between Puget Sound Indian tribes and commercial growers two years ago was meant to end years of rancor over shellfish harvesting rights.

But some growers were surprised to learn this summer that some of their tidelands may not qualify under the settlement, potentially opening them up to tribal harvest.

In 2007, 17 Puget Sound tribes agreed to give up treaty rights to harvest shellfish from commercial shellfish beds, as long as the beds had been actively farmed before Aug. 28, 1995. In return, the tribe got \$33

million in state and federal money to buy and lease tidelands for their own use.

Commercial growers submitted documents insisting 864 parcels should be exempt from the settlements, but in papers filed with a federal court in Seattle in June, the tribes objected to half of those.

The settlement stemmed from a 1994 federal court ruling recognizing the tribes’ rights to a share of naturally occurring shellfish grown on Washington tidelands controlled by commercial growers.

Growers who proved they actively farmed shellfish beds before U.S. District Judge Ed-

ward Rafeedie issued his Aug. 28, 1995, order would be exempt from tribal harvest.

Tony Forsman, shellfish and wildlife policy analyst for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, said growers had to provide specific documentation that their shellfish beds were actively farmed before that date.

Some growers missed the deadline to submit documents, while others filed improper paperwork, said Forsman, who helped negotiate the agreement. “Some filed stuff that would negate them,” and others didn’t meet the criteria outright, he said.

Mayors oppose Glendale casino

PHOENIX (AP) — Five mayors are voicing their opposition to an Indian-run casino on a county island in Glendale.

The mayors of Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Surprise and Youngtown join Glendale in opposing a casino developed by the Tohono O’odham Nation.

Buckeye Mayor Jackie Meck said a tribe should not be able to go into a city or town, purchase land and create a reservation without any input from city leaders.

Plans for the casino were announced seven months ago.

While Glendale opposes a casino, the mayors of Peoria and Tolleson sent letters to the U.S. Department of Interior supporting the casino and the jobs it would bring. Tribal Chairman Ned Norris Jr. said he would have liked to have met with city officials who are opposed to the casino project.

Investigation has artifact dealers on edge

SANTA FE, New Mexico (AP) — A federal investigation into the sale of Native American artifacts has brought fear and uncertainty to one of the nation’s largest and longest-running Indian artifact shows.

Wealthy collectors are more cautious about buying artifacts for fear of criminal liability, and reputable dealers say they’re working double-time to prove their legitimacy after being wrongly lumped together with looters and gravediggers.

The aisles of the exhibit hall at the 31st annual Whitehawk Antique Show were crowded with collectors, including business leaders and Santa Fe’s elite. There were hugs and handshakes from the dealers for their regular customers, but rumors were circulating about suspicious vans outside and undercover federal agents.

Anniversary Sale
 Sale starts September 1st.
ALL FURNITURE
 10% off 15% off 20% off 25% off
 Selected Electronics and Major Home Appliances also on Sale!
 Come draw from the Treasure Chest for your Discount Coupon!
 Sale ends September 30 - (Sale applies to all furniture in stock)