

PRESS RELEASE- JULY 26, 2022

**OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE ANNOUNCES NEW LITIGATION
AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FOR ITS FAILURE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES**

Today, the Oglala Sioux Tribe was forced to file a lawsuit against the United States and the U.S. Department of the Interior for their failure to provide adequate law enforcement services on the Pine Ridge Reservation despite the Tribe's horrific rise in crime.

Since January 2022, the Oglala Sioux Tribal Police Department has responded to 285 missing persons' cases, 308 gun rated calls, and over 20 questionable deaths, many of which the Tribe expects to learn have been attributed to murder, manslaughter or assault.

Hard drugs, including heroin and fentanyl, have entered the Reservation from urban areas and the level of domestic violence, rapes and assaults has increased substantially over the last two years.

Despite this serious increase in violent crime, the federal government has not increased the Tribe's tribal law enforcement funding significantly in years. In fact, while the Tribe has seen some small increases in federal dollars, mostly from Congressionally mandated appropriations added to current and past Presidential requests, those increases have paid for little more than the Tribe's rising costs of gasoline and insurance, neither of which the Tribe has any ability to control.

Today, the Bureau of Indian Affairs openly admits that it is only funding tribal law enforcement nationally at about 50% of actual need.

The BIA has openly stated that at least 2.8 officers per 1,000 people are required to operate an effective law enforcement program in a rural area the size of Pine Ridge. The Oglala Sioux Tribe today has less than one-quarter of that number.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe's law enforcement service population does not just include Oglala tribal members living on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It also includes those Oglala members who reside on other Reservations and in the boarder-towns, but who visit the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation regularly. It also includes those non-Indians and members of other federally recognized tribes living on the Reservation and those individuals who make deliveries to or provide services to the Tribe and its on-Reservation population. These are the individuals whose E-911 calls for on-Pine Ridge police assistance are answered by the Oglala Sioux Tribe's E-911 law enforcement dispatch center and referred to its tribal police department.

Per federal, state and tribal statistics; this equates to 40,000 people, which by federal law enforcement standards requires a police force of over 140 tribal officers. Pine Ridge is today funded for only thirty-three.

Despite repeated requests to the White House and the Secretary of the Interior, the United States' Bureau of Indian Affairs continues to provide the Tribe with only 33 police officers, or 6-8 officers per shift, to cover its over 130,000 E-911 calls per year, on its 3.1 million acres (about the size of Connecticut).

The Oglala Sioux Tribe's Tribal Police Department is now at a point where each of its officers are working, on average, of 240 hours each per month (or 80 hours of overtime), not counting travel to and from police headquarters. They are also working alone, with backup being in excess of 30 minutes away, even in cases involving gun violence. This is endangering both the officers and the public.

Federal detention policies require that all arrestees who are injured or under the influence of drugs, mental issues or alcohol, have an official medical clearance before they are placed in a federal or tribal jail. Those medical clearances are currently requiring, on average, over 3 hours per individual. As a result, those medical clearances are regularly taking one or more Pine Ridge Tribal Officers off the road and off of the Tribal Police call referral list, multiple times a week or even a day, thereby decreasing the Tribe's available officers to 4-6 per shift.

In announcing this lawsuit, President Killer noted: "We deeply regret having to take this action against the Biden Administration and U.S. Secretary of the Interior, both of whom have been good friends to Oglala and the other tribes, but the level of violent crime, drugs and guns on the Pine Ridge Reservation has gotten out of hand."

Killer also noted that "The Oglala Sioux Tribe has always strived to be a good neighbor and a law abiding, safe and secure tribal community. One which is highly concerned for the welfare of its members, residents and visitors."

"No one should have to be concerned when they leave their home on our Reservation or travel to our tribal lands. While this litigation is regrettable, our Oglala Sioux Tribal Council is determined to protect its tribal members, reservation residents, local businesses and visitors." "Thus, whatever we need to do to stop this increase in crime, we will do. We simply cannot, and will not, allow guns, drugs and violence to threaten our community anymore, it is just that simple!"

In closing, President Killer called for peace: "The Tribe Council, your extended family, is asking all of our brothers, sisters and young relatives who are suffering to put down the guns, put down the drugs and alcohol, and come home to our beautiful culture and history. Your Tribe will also be here to welcome you, and we will always be here to help you."

noted that the Oglala Sioux Tribe wants to express its strong support for the law enforcement claims which its friends and neighbors, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe of Montana brought against the Bureau of Indian Affairs on July 22, 2022. "They too have had their law enforcement needs ignored and that is equally wrong."

