



Department of Justice

TESTIMONY OF

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DENVER FIELD DIVISION
U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

FOR A FIELD OVERSIGHT HEARING

**ADDRESSING THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DANGEROUS DRUGS IN
NATIVE COMMUNITIES**

PRESENTED ON

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**Testimony of Barbra M. Roach
Special Agent in Charge, Denver Field Division
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
Before the Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
March 31, 2015**

Distinguished members of the Committee, on the behalf of Administrator Leonhart, I appreciate your invitation to submit testimony today regarding the drug trafficking threats to the Wind River Indian Reservation along with efforts to assist our federal, state, local and tribal partners.

Introduction

The mission of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and to bring to the criminal and civil justice system, those organizations and principal members of organizations, involved in the growing, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances appearing in, or destined for, illicit traffic in the United States.

DEA currently has over 307 offices around the world, including 221 domestic offices and 86 foreign offices. Wherever DEA operates, we build relationships with other law enforcement agencies, including at the federal, state, local, and tribal level. If we are to be successful in accomplishing our mission, it is essential that we work together, share information and coordinate available resources to ensure that they are deployed in the most effective manner possible.

Within the Denver Field Division, we have over 200 employees comprised of Special Agents, Diversion Investigators, Task Force Officers, and individuals assigned to Administrative Support. These personnel are distributed between the Division Office in Denver, a District Office in Salt Lake City, four Resident Offices, and five Posts of Duty. This division covers 433,868 square miles consisting of the states of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. In Wyoming, DEA specifically has one Resident Office in Cheyenne, one Post of Duty in Casper and is staffed with 23 individuals which cover the entire state, which includes the Wind River Indian Reservation.

Wind River Reservation Drug Threat

Currently, the most common drugs illegally trafficked in and around the communities of the Wind River Indian Reservation are marijuana, pharmaceuticals, and methamphetamine.

Marijuana is both the most commonly abused illegal drug as well as the most challenging to address. Since the State of Colorado legalized marijuana for medical and recreational use under state law, DEA has observed that its availability has become more wide spread throughout the region. DEA is aware of instances of Wyoming residents traveling to Colorado to obtain user amounts of marijuana. The illicit use and abuse of pharmaceutical products is also of significant concern for the Wind River area. As with marijuana, prescription pills are also popular with youth. Through doctor shopping and using pharmacies outside of the reservation area, it is not uncommon for individuals to obtain hundreds of pills at a time for illicit re-sale.

Methamphetamine trafficking and abuse also remain a significant challenge for the Wind River area as well as Wyoming in general. Most of the methamphetamine distributed throughout the Wind River Reservation and surrounding area is of Mexican origin. Methamphetamine distributors on the reservation routinely travel to Lander, Casper, Riverton, Rock Springs, Salt Lake City, and even as far as Denver to obtain ounce or multi-ounce quantities.

DEA Response

Working in close cooperation with our law enforcement partners, many of whom are represented at this table, DEA's Denver Field Division has conducted numerous investigations which have positively impacted the Wind River Reservation. Some of the more notable efforts are the following:

In 2010, DEA Casper, Wyoming's Department of Criminal Investigations (DCI), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the State of Wyoming's Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) in Wyoming conducted an investigation into a methamphetamine-cocaine drug trafficking organization supplying Phoenix and Salt Lake City. The drug trafficking organization was identified as distributing narcotics on the Wind River Reservation. Thirteen judicially authorized telephonic intercepts were conducted during the investigation which resulted in 58 arrests, the seizure of ten pounds of methamphetamine, and \$190,000 of trafficker assets.

In 2011, DEA Casper, working in conjunction with DCI, BIA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Marshals Service (USMS), Wyoming OAG and the Wyoming USAO, investigated the illicit distribution of cocaine and methamphetamine being sent to Wyoming from Mexico. The targets of this investigation were identified as sources of supply of narcotics to several individuals in and around the Wind River Reservation. DEA investigators along with our law enforcement partners conducted seven judicially approved telephonic intercepts and made numerous undercover purchases of narcotics from the primary sources of supply. This investigation resulted in the arrests of 30 members of the drug trafficking organization, including the sources of supply along with the seizure of methamphetamine, cocaine, and related assets.

In 2011, a Mexican-supplied drug trafficking organization based in the State of Washington was identified as distributing methamphetamine and marijuana on the Wind River Reservation. DEA's Casper office, working in coordination with DCI, BIA, FBI, Wyoming OAG and the Wyoming USAO conducted 16 judicially authorized telephonic intercepts against the leadership of this criminal organization. The investigation culminated with 56 arrests, the seizure of five pounds of methamphetamine and \$60,000 in assets.

In 2011, DEA Denver met with the Indian Health Service clinics located on reservation at Fort Washakie and Arapahoe, both of which provide healthcare services to residents of Wind River. DEA Diversion Investigators also met retail pharmacies and conducted several on-site inspections which resulted in recommendations to strengthen regulatory compliance. Additionally, investigators met with off-reservation law enforcement to coordinate efforts and raise drug diversion awareness.

From 2011 to 2012, DEA Casper worked alongside DCI, BIA, FBI, Wyoming OAG and Wyoming USAO to target and dismantle a methamphetamine distribution network being supplied by individuals in Nevada and California with ties to the Wind River Reservation. In this instance, investigators utilized an array of investigative techniques to include telephonic intercepts, undercover agents and physical surveillance to gather evidence for prosecution. As a result, 41 members of the organization were arrested.

In 2013, DEA agents from Cheyenne and Casper, along with investigators from DCI, BIA, FBI, Wyoming OAG and Wyoming USAO conducted an investigation of a Mexican drug trafficking organization based in Lander. This organization was responsible for distributing narcotics statewide, to include the Wind River Reservation. During extensive use of judicially authorized telephonic intercepts, the highest levels of the organization in Wyoming were identified for prosecution. At the conclusion of this investigation the organization was fully dismantled, ten subjects were arrested, significant amounts of methamphetamine and more than \$100,000 in assets were seized.

Looking ahead, the Denver Field Division has met with the Wyoming U.S. Attorney and Director of the DCI to discuss the establishment a Tactical Diversion Squad (TDS) in Wyoming. As a result of these meetings, DEA is considering an expansion of its TDS program into Wyoming. Tactical Diversion Squads are DEA's primary tool to investigate the diversion of pharmaceutical drugs containing controlled substances. A TDS incorporates the enforcement, investigative, and regulatory skill sets of DEA Special Agents, Diversion Investigators, as well as creates a focal point for partnerships with other Federal law enforcement, and state and local Task Force Officers. The establishment of a TDS based in Wyoming would increase DEA's capability to conduct criminal investigations and could lead to more prosecutions of violators throughout Wyoming, to include the Wind River Reservation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, DEA will continue to investigate the most significant drug trafficking organizations affecting the state. These investigations will continue to identify-disrupt and dismantle foreign, regional, and local networks most responsible for illicit distribution of controlled substances, to include the area in and around the Wind River Reservation. DEA has

an outstanding working relationship with its federal, state, local and tribal partners in Wyoming and will continue to work in partnership with them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today before the committee. I look forward to answering any questions.