



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEB. 1, 2007

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Public Safety Committee chairperson's comments on funding inaccurately portrays success of Navajo Division of Public Safety

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation's chief of staff and public safety director have issued corrections to newspaper statements attributed to the chairperson of the Navajo Nation Council's Public Safety Committee.

Patrick Sandoval, chief of staff in the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, and Samson Cowboy, executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, said funding figures used by Public Safety Committee Chairperson Hope MacDonald-LoneTree were inaccurate. In addition, he said her comments implied that the division was not obtaining all the federal funding it was eligible to receive, and appeared designed to undermine Mr. Cowboy's success in leading the division.

"Ms. MacDonald-LoneTree's understanding of the budgeting process is questionable," Mr. Sandoval said, referring to comments in a Jan. 31 Gallup Independent news story. "We've had annual funding increases for public safety every year since Mr. Cowboy has been public safety director. If this is Hope MacDonald's crash course to new public safety committee members, she's misleading you and the public."

In the news story, Ms. MacDonald-LoneTree is quoted as saying the Navajo Nation must not let funding opportunities pass by, and that because of a lack of effort by Navajo Division of Public Safety staffs, the Nation missed capturing \$11 million of federal funding available for public safety. Instead, she alleges, the division sought only \$300,000 in Bureau of Indian Affairs discretionary funds.

In actuality, Mr. Sandoval said, the \$11 million was the total amount of 2005 BIA discretionary funding available to more than 300 Native American law enforcement agencies. Had that figure been equally distributed, he said, it would have amounted to \$37,000 per tribe.

However, rather than receive only \$300,000, the Navajo Nation received \$670,348 for fiscal year 2006, according to Christopher B. Chaney, BIA Deputy Bureau Director. The funding award was actually an increase to the Navajo Nation's law enforcement base funding, he said.

"To suggest there has been anything other than continued progress during Samson Cowboy's tenure is an unveiled attempt to undermine him for political purposes."

– Navajo Nation Chief of Staff Patrick Sandoval

The funds were first made available to BIA Office of Law Enforcement Services in September 2005.

"OLES acknowledges the dedication and hard work done by the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety," Mr. Chaney wrote in a March 2006 BIA award letter to Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr. "Law enforcement officers literally put their lives on the line every day at work and their sacrifices and public services help make our nation a much safer place. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to public safety."

"We're looking forward to working with the committee because we only deal in facts," Mr. Cowboy said.

In the Independent's story, committee member Raymond Joe asked Ms. MacDonald-Lonetree, "So we lost out on about \$10.4 million?"

"Yes, that was given out to other tribes," she responds.

But that statement is a distortion of the facts, Mr. Sandoval said.

"The Navajo Nation got the biggest chunk of that money," he said. "There was absolutely no lack of effort on our part. Our initial request was for \$1 million and we received 67 percent, which is far greater than any other tribe received. As PSC chair, Ms. MacDonald-LoneTree should be praising public safety rather than finding fault with their work."

Ms. MacDonald-LoneTree is also quoted as saying that if the Navajo Nation loses its federal funding, "our services could be shut down."

Mr. Sandoval called that statement both reckless and irresponsible.

He said he believed Ms. MacDonald-Lonetree's comments are designed to build a case against Mr. Cowboy, and in support of recent legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley, Houck/Lupton/Nahata Dziel, to have Mr. Cowboy removed.

"During President Shirley first term and under Samson Cowboy's leadership, the division has doubled the number of officers in the field, obtained 157 new police package vehicles, trained more than 500 personnel in the

CODY communications systems and updated its technology," Mr. Sandoval said. "Mr. Cowboy was recently recognized as Professional of the Year by the National Native American Law Enforcement Association. To suggest there has been anything other than continued progress during his tenure is an unveiled attempt to undermine him for political purposes."

"Outside of our own public safety committee chairperson, Mr. Cowboy's leadership, and the Navajo Division of Public Safety is seen as a model for all of Indian Country," Mr. Sandoval said.

The news story also quoted a committee member telling the committee that an unnamed Diné College professor who failed to submit a \$100,000 proposal was fired by the Board of Regents.

However, Diné College Board President Clinton Jim said there is no record of such an incident occurring.

"I've been representing the Eastern Agency since 2000, and since then there's no record of sending funding back or of a teacher being released for not submitting a proposal," he said. "If there was a problem, we would have known."

Mr. Sandoval said it is disheartening to have misinformation presented to committee members as fact, and equally discouraging that a local newspaper makes no attempt to confirm unsubstantiated information presented during PSC meetings.

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