

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

We write to ask the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine the factors contributing to a public safety crisis in Indian Country. Specifically, we are attempting to learn about how the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office of Justice Services (OJS) responds to significant increases in crime and law enforcement personnel shortages.

In the last two years, tribal leaders on the Great Plains have reported a significant increase in violent and drug-related crime. Law enforcement leaders in Indian Country directly attribute the recent uptick in crime to police personnel shortages. Consequently, criminal entities are directly targeting reservation communities and distributing higher volumes of illegal drugs.

In an effort to improve law enforcement services in reservation communities, tribal law enforcement leaders have begun to closely examine BIA budgetary practices. While it is apparent the agency considers several factors when allocating appropriated funding, it is unclear if the agency has set procedures for responding to public safety emergencies. Moreover, there are a number of other unanswered questions related to the funding of tribal law enforcement.

Accordingly, we request that GAO examine the following issues and provide responses to the below questions:

1. Has the number of tribal law enforcement personnel in Indian Country increased in the last 20 years?
2. How many law enforcement positions remain unfilled at tribally-controlled and direct service departments?
3. How much has tribal law enforcement funding increased in the last 20 years?

4. Since 1999, all budget increases for tribal law enforcement agencies have been added on top of historical base amounts (enacted funding levels in 1999). How has this change impacted the distribution of law enforcement funding?
5. How many calls for service do tribal law enforcement officers respond to annually?
6. Does the BIA OJS set aside resources for public safety emergencies?
7. Does the BIA report on the distribution of carryover funding to individual tribal law enforcement agencies?

Sincerely,



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



John Thune
United States Senator