

Field Hearing July 2, 2008
Northern Border
Sen. Testers Office,
Havre, Montana
Testimony for Blackfeet Homeland Security
By: Robert DesRosier, Director

Good Morning:

My name is Robert DesRosier, I am employed by the Blackfeet Nation in Browning Montana; I currently serve as Director for the Blackfeet Homeland Security Program and the Disaster and Emergency Services Program. I also manage the Tribal Utilities program with five small community drinking water and wastewater systems throughout the Reservation.

The 1.5 million acre Blackfeet Nation is located in Northwestern Montana, The Reservation's northern border is very remote and wild. It is situated along the International Border with Canada for a geographical distance of approximately 65 miles, which is one-tenth of Montana's Northern border. Many times throughout and along our Northern Border there have been crossings of a person or persons illegally entering into the United States through Blackfeet Nation lands. Most recently, vehicle tracks were spotted in an area just west of the Del Bonita Port of Entry. Three vehicles approached the border from the North, pulled up the fence post in the fence, laying down the wire, and the vehicles drove over the border and continued south into the United States. The tracks revealed that the vehicles were traveling together, and were compatible with a full size vehicle; either three SUV's or full sized pickups. In the Chief Mountain area foot and vehicle traffic has increased this past year as revealed by evidence left behind in the form of tracks. Off-road vehicles have crossed the border repeatedly in the Lee Creek Drainage North of Chief Mountain. There are many places along the Northern Border in the Blackfeet Reservation where illegal Border crossings have taken place. In If you go down to your local map store and purchase a topographical map of the Blackfeet Reservation you will find that there are approximately nine roads that access the northern border, five of those show sign of recent crossings. It is foolish if we think our northern border is secure today. We have much to do.

The local communities have the most interest and knowledge to control the areas of concern as relating to crime and Border related issues. Ideas from Washington DC do not usually fit the objectives of the local area. Our input, the native community, is of the utmost importance when dealing with topics that have an impact on tribal lands and the entire United States. We must work to fund and train local tribal law enforcement for methods of deterrent and investigative procedures to deter crime, most importantly, border crime. The local Native American law enforcement officer has the integrity, courage, scout and warrior skills necessary for the protection of his homeland and his people. The ancestral values, field crafts, tracking, sign cutting, survival skills, and mental conditioning provide qualities for good field detectives. The Native American can travel across wild country using many methods and possess the natural skills to survive and handle whatever comes their way.

Indian Nations, most importantly, must stand up and participate in the fight in our nation's war against terror; The Blackfeet are known as true Americans eager to stand against our enemies. Local Tribal members have an outstanding record of producing qualified professionals who, without a doubt, would lay down their lives for defense of this great nation. Currently there are over 120 men and women from our local Indian community actively participating with our armed forces in the war on terror.

The Blackfeet Tribal Program consists of two officers, Keith Lame Bear and I. We work in the area of Law Enforcement with our primary focus on Homeland Security/Border issues. Our program is unfunded, Salaries comes from other unrelated sources within Tribal Government. Our participation along the Border is in the form of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Army Air National Guard for aircraft support for surveillance and reconnaissance missions. Flights usually are three times a month, lasting for about two hours. Our ground patrols have been scaled back to about four times a month. Contact with the border on the average is about six to eight times a month. Observation points have been identified at various locations for ground surveillance in some areas. Local intelligence reveals that there is a local tribal member offering guide services for undetected border crossings for an individual fee of \$1500. Our program also includes patrols in areas of critical infrastructure, such as the three large dams on the reservations headwaters. Patrol vehicles and necessary equipment is in the form of donations or transferred surplus from the BIA and GSA. Adequate two-way radio and cell phone equipment is non-existent.

Never before in the history of this great nation has the topic of Homeland Security become most important for us and our future generation's survival as a free and democratic society for all to enjoy. Threats to the United States come from all directions as well as from within. Terrorists, both foreign and domestic, continually desire to destroy the fabric that this country was founded on and the freedoms that we as Americans stand for and symbolize.

The Blackfeet Nation remains firm as a sovereign nation and as front line security forces committed to participation in the defense of the United States here in our homeland. We must continue to wage the International war on terrorism and work hard to deter all homeland threats. Complacency must not be allowed to become our enemy, our continued vigilance will ensure lasting success in our Nations war. We are in need of adequate funding for our proposed nine personnel security forces. The Blackfeet Homeland Security Forces will become a recognizable, professional, and competent police force that will address the many complex potential attacks against our citizens.

Thank you, it has been my pleasure for the opportunity to offer this testimony here on this great day in the history of this Nation.