



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Border Patrol, Native American Leaders Meet to Bolster Border Security**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Border Patrol officials and other representatives of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) are meeting with Native American leaders and law enforcement officials today and tomorrow in Washington, D.C., to explore ways of jointly strengthening security along both the Southwest and Northern borders. The two-day conference, the first of its kind, is also being attended by representatives of the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of Homeland Security, as well as the National Native American Law Enforcement Association.

“Border Patrol agents have been working with Native Americans since the Patrol was established more than 75 years ago,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft. “This partnership has been productive in assisting us to meet the complex challenges we face to make our borders more secure.”

Eleven of 21 Border Patrol Sectors encompass Native American lands that are adjacent to a U.S. border.\* Representatives of 19 tribes from these Sectors are participating in the conference.

Greater cooperation with tribal police has been spurred, in part, by the success of the national border control strategy launched by the Border Patrol in 1994. The initial phase of this multi-year plan focused on the traditional illegal crossing corridor along the Southwest border, which tended to be in urban areas. As success grew, undocumented migrants, drug smugglers and others seeking to enter the United States illegally began looking for more remote areas to cross the border. Indian lands have been targeted because they are not only remote but also because jurisdiction over them is shared by federal, state, and tribal governments.

“If there was any question about the need to maximize cooperation and coordination, it was answered by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon,” said INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. “This conference creates an opportunity for us to bind together as a brotherhood and address our mutual interest in establishing more secure borders. Doing so will allow us to enhance public safety and protect the great freedoms that we, as a nation, cherish.”

\* These Sectors are: Tucson, Yuma, Del Rio, and Marfa on the Southwest Border; and Houlton, Swanton, Buffalo, Detroit, Grand Forks, Havre, and Blaine on the Northern border.