



Department of Justice

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**MONTANA U.S. ATTORNEY MICHAEL W. COTTER DELIVERS REMARKS ON
ANNOUNCEMENT OF BAKKEN ORGANIZED CRIME STRIKE FORCE**

Remarks as prepared for delivery

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

It is an honor for me, as the United States Attorney for the District of Montana, to stand alongside my friend and colleague, Chris Myers, the North Dakota U.S. Attorney, Bruce Ohr, OCDETF Director and North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

I am pleased to be here joining U.S. Attorney Myers and Attorney General Stenehjem in the announcement of the North Dakota Bakken Strike Force, as part of our joint Project Safe Bakken. The creation of this Strike Force is another sign of the true partnership, the joined forces of the Montana and North Dakota law enforcement, the U.S. Department of Justice and federal agencies and tribes to fight organized crime in the region. The Bakken Strike Force is another tool in our continuing battle to make North Dakota and Montana communities in the oil patch safer.

The crime in the Bakken is not just a Montana problem or a North Dakota problem. It is truly a regional problem—an evil that affects everyone in Montana, North Dakota and our friends in Saskatchewan. The battle cannot be won by the state going it alone, or the feds going it alone—the battle for the safety of our communities will be won by a true partnership between state, federal and tribal law enforcement with the sole goal of detecting, disrupting and dismantling organized crime. The Bakken Strike Force is such a partnership.

Director Ohr's presence emphasizes just how concerned the United States Department of Justice is and how focused the federal government is in battling organized crime in the Bakken.

By way of perspective—before 2013, the Montana U.S. Attorney's Office had very few cases from northeastern Montana or the Bakken area. We had very few federal agents in the region.

In April, 2012, the top law enforcement officials from Montana and North Dakota met in Glasgow, Montana. The meeting was attended by 150 law enforcement officers from Montana, North Dakota and Saskatchewan who work in or near the Bakken oil field. We all agreed that with the influx of 20 to 30 thousand oil field workers we would see an increase in violent crime, gun incidents, drug trafficking, and the organized crime. Law enforcement was spot on—they were right.

In 2013, Montana and North Dakota created Project Safe Bakken, a true partnership, between federal, state and tribal law enforcement. It is designed to detect, disrupt and dismantle organized criminal enterprises. Its goal is to eradicate drugs, violent crime, economic crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking and environmental crime.

Federal agents began work in the Bakken—agents from DEA, FBI, ATF, EPA, BIA, U.S. Border Patrol and Montana Division of Criminal Investigation. Intelligence on criminal activity was collected and shared between Montana and North Dakota. In Sidney, Montana, the FBI has placed two Special Agents and has two local DCI agents sworn as federal agents, for a total of four federal agents. Because of their authority, these four agents will work cases in Montana and North Dakota.

Even though it has been challenging to develop cases in the Bakken region, primarily because of its remoteness and lack of resources, the federal response has been robust. Since 2013, this is what the Montana United States Attorney's Office has done to dismantle criminal organizations operating in the Bakken in Montana and North Dakota.

DRUG CRIMES

- 11 OCDETF operations in the Bakken region
- 9 drug trafficking organizations have been dismantled
- 210 individuals have been indicted or convicted of federal narcotics charges
- 49 other individuals/subjects are under investigation
- Ben Hunn, an ex-licensed pharmacist in Sidney, Montana, distributed Vicodin, Xanax and other drugs to the victim, who did not have a prescription, that resulted in the victim's death.

FIREARM CRIMES

- William Foust stole 13 firearms from a Sidney, Montana, business last year, claiming he had fallen under financial duress. He was convicted of being a felon in possession.

ECONOMIC CRIMES

- In January 2014, Mike Campa was sentenced to 30 years in prison and more than five million dollars in restitution for masterminding a nationwide oil lease telemarketing scam involving fraudulent investments in leases on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation

in eastern Montana. His business partner and co-defendant, Steve Carpenter, who had a history of telemarketing fraud, was sentenced to 15 ½ years.

- Jonathan Oliver, of Missoula, Montana, was sentenced to eight years for conning victims into thinking he was building steel structures in the Bakken. He received millions of dollars in advanced payments but only completed one building. He used most of the money from victims to buy expensive items for himself.

WORKER ENDANGERMENT CRIMES

- Kelly Steen, another Montana resident, was convicted of crimes involving the transportation of hazardous material. Steen claimed that he was transporting non-hazardous products. After the truck caught on fire and the tanks burned for eight days, authorities determined he was transporting drip gas, which is flammable.

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

- Montana man, Nathan R. Garber, pleaded guilty in federal court in Bismarck to eleven felony charges stemming from the operation of a saltwater disposal well near Dickinson, North Dakota. He violated the Safe Drinking Water Act, made false statements, and falsified records.
- In January of this year, a pipeline carrying approximately 30,000 gallons of crude oil from the Bakken ruptured, sending 1,200-plus barrels of crude oil into the Yellowstone River upstream from Glendive, Montana. The EPA is investigating.

As you can see from these crimes, they span a vast region and are an acute threat to the environmental, financial and physical health of the people in our communities. The Bakken Strike Force will be another tool we can utilize to fight crime in the Bakken.

I am pleased to be here, encouraged by our past partnership and looking forward to the continued good work we will be doing together in the years to come.

Thank you.

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