



U.S. Department of the Interior News Release

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Secretary Haaland Creates New Missing & Murdered Unit to Pursue Justice for Missing or Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives

New unit will coordinate interagency collaboration and strengthen existing law enforcement resources

WASHINGTON – Today Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the formation of a new Missing & Murdered Unit (MMU) within the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS) to provide leadership and direction for cross-departmental and interagency work involving missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. The MMU will help put the full weight of the federal government into investigating these cases and marshal law enforcement resources across federal agencies and throughout Indian country.

“Violence against Indigenous peoples is a crisis that has been underfunded for decades. Far too often, murders and missing persons cases in Indian country go unsolved and unaddressed, leaving families and communities devastated,” **said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland**. “The new MMU unit will provide the resources and leadership to prioritize these cases and coordinate resources to hold people accountable, keep our communities safe, and provide closure for families.”

Approximately 1,500 American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) throughout the U.S., and approximately 2,700 cases of murder and nonnegligent homicide offenses have been reported to the Federal Government’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

A task force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives — Operation Lady Justice (OLJ) — was formed in 2019 to pursue these unresolved cases. Today’s announcement builds on that work by designating new leadership and support positions, including a Unit Chief responsible for stakeholder collaboration, continued policy development, and overall performance of the unit. The Department is also designating new positions with existing federal funding to support

the investigative needs of the MMU, including the collection and analysis of performance data and coordination of services with the families of victims.

Investigations remain unsolved often due to a lack of investigative resources available to identify new information from witness testimony, re-examine new or retained material evidence, and review fresh activities of suspects. The MMU, in addition to reviewing unsolved cases, will immediately begin working with Tribal, BIA and FBI Investigators on active Missing and Murdered investigations.

The MMU will also enable the Department to expand its collaborative efforts with other agencies, such as working to enhance the DOJ's National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), and developing strategic partnerships with additional stakeholders such as the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Units (BAU's), the FBI Forensic Laboratory, the US Marshals Missing Child Unit (MCU) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

“Whether it's a missing family member or a homicide investigation, these efforts will be all hands-on deck,” **Secretary Haaland continued.** “We are fully committed to assisting Tribal communities with these investigations, and the MMU will leverage every resource available to be a force-multiplier in preventing these cases from becoming cold case investigations.”

For more information, please visit [Missing & Murdered Unit \(MMU\) – Operation Lady Justice](#).

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About the U.S. Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior (DOI) conserves and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people, provides scientific and other information about natural resources and natural hazards to address societal challenges and create opportunities for the American people, and honors the Nation's trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities to help them prosper.



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