



For Immediate Release

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**Washington State Patrol and U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
Agree on Plan to Resume Patrols on State Routes in Yakama Nation
Roles Clarified in Retrocession Policy**

Yakima, WA - The Washington State Patrol (WSP) and U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs have agreed on a plan to renew patrols on state routes on Yakama Nation reservation lands. A memorandum of understanding was approved last week clarifying roles and challenges associated with the policy of retrocession.

Signed into law by Gov. Christine Gregoire in 2012, retrocession is a policy to address differing interpretations of treaties and allows tribal governments to seek the return of jurisdiction in certain civil and criminal matters. Currently, eight of the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington have acquired some level of retrocession, including the Tulalip, Colville, Muckleshoot, Swinomish, Skokomish, Chehalis, Quileute and Yakama tribes.

In the case of the Yakama Nation, the 1855 treaty with the U.S. government addressed certain tribal rights that remained in dispute until the tribe approved retrocession in 2015. Once confirmed by Gov. Jay Inslee on April 19, 2016, retrocession gave tribal courts and tribal police jurisdiction over more cases on the reservation.

However, there were questions on the specific authority of the WSP with regards to stops of tribal members. Until those issues were clarified, WSP continued to respond to all calls on the reservation for emergencies but has not been actively patrolling the approximately 75 miles of state routes on tribal lands. Since April 2016, WSP has been dispatched to 6,741 calls for service on the Yakama reservation and responded to 4,881 that were within WSP jurisdiction.

During the hiatus in active patrolling, WSP continued to assist other law enforcement agencies on Yakama lands as well. The FBI is in charge of responding to major crimes on reservation lands and in 2019, they were assisted by WSP in the investigation of the mass killing in White Swan. WSP has one of the largest unmanned aerial vehicle fleets in the country and deployed its technology for crime scene mapping along with other evidence-gathering resources in assistance to the FBI's ongoing investigation.

“We are gratified that our troopers will soon be able to receive the special law enforcement commissions required by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs that will allow us to more seamlessly work with our tribal partners in the Yakama Nation,” said WSP Chief John Batiste. “Barring the unforeseen, we are hopeful to have those in place in the next 60 to 90 days and will again be proactively patrolling the state routes inside tribal lands while respecting the sovereignty of the Yakama people and the partnership in service we enjoy.”

The new agreement will expand the services currently provided by WSP on tribal land. Gov. Jay Inslee stated, “Public safety is one of the paramount duties of government, and I am glad the Yakama Nation and Washington State Patrol have come together to find a solutions-based approach to safety for everyone.”

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