

**“THE BAKKEN: EXAMINING EFFORTS TO ADDRESS LAW ENFORCEMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS”**

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Good morning, Chairman Tester and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be here with you today to discuss the FBI's efforts to combat crime in the Bakken region.

The Bakken formation is now considered one of the most important sources of oil in the United States. In fact, late last year, the U.S. Energy Information Administration projected that Bakken production in North Dakota and Montana would ultimately exceed one million barrels per day.

The development of the Bakken oil fields has also caused a sharp spike in both population and income levels. Unfortunately, the boom in population in the region also provides significant opportunities for an influx of criminal elements. In its 2014 National Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy, the Office of National Drug Control Policy specifically highlighted drug trafficking within the Bakken region among its significant threats.

In early 2013, in response to this burgeoning crime problem, the FBI along with its federal and state law enforcement partners began to develop a strategy to address the increase in the criminal threat to the region. In May, 2013, the FBI working with the United States Attorney's offices in Montana and North Dakota participated in the first combined strategy session of Project Safe Bakken. This effort resulted in the FBI's decision to surge resources to the Bakken area and locate them in Sidney Montana. Here in Montana, two Agents have been co-located with their state and local counterparts in the Richland Sheriff's Office since July, 2013. Additionally, their efforts are supported and bolstered by numerous FBI Resident Agencies and two FBI Field Offices. Our intelligence process to consistently assess the ongoing threat which informs and influences resource decisions to effectively address those threats which in turn ensure the FBI effectively addresses the threats created by the Bakken development. At present, FBI Headquarters is continuing to evaluate the threat and has assured us they will continue to direct additional resources as necessary.

As a threat based, intelligence driven organization, the FBI relies heavily on intelligence gathered from our state and local law enforcement partners and private sector relationships. Project Safe Bakken was a deliberate, precise targeting of an emerging criminal threat to the area. The purpose of this long-term project is to detect, disrupt, and dismantle drug trafficking organizations and criminal enterprises that are operating in the Bakken region of Montana and North Dakota.

Importantly, this task force approach allows us to both share intelligence and force multiply. Through such efforts, we not only address those crimes which are statutorily within the FBI's jurisdiction, but also share vital information needed by our state, local, and tribal partners to combat crime within their community. For example, collaborative efforts among federal, state, local, and tribal partners in June 2013 resulted in the arrest of 22 people. Similarly, in October 2013, a coordinated effort led to four arrests in North Dakota and 12 in Montana.

Earlier this year, Operation Pipe Cleaner and Operation Pale Mule saw the arrests of more than 35 individuals. The charges were predominantly related to drugs, specifically heroin and methamphetamine, which have become increasingly available in the Bakken region.

As an example of our continuing coordination and integration with local law enforcement, within the last month our agents worked with the Sidney Police Department in Montana and the Williston Police Department in North Dakota on two large firearms thefts. Our Agents worked with the police departments and were able to gather significant evidence. Using this evidence we were able to leverage our national resources to gather items of comparison from California that led to the identification and arrest of a suspect. This investigation is ongoing and may result in additional charges.

Chairman Tester, let me assure you the FBI remains committed to assisting our state and local partners in making certain that the safety and well-being of the people of Montana remains a priority. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I now look forward to answering any questions you might have.