

December 21, 2007

Department of Interior
ATTN: Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs
1849 C St NW
Washington DC 20240

Honorable Assistant Secretary

My name is Russell Mason, Sr., an enrolled elder of the Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT) and a registered member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Elders Organization (MHAEO) which is an entity of the TAT, membership in the MHAEO is enrolled tribal members 60 years and older. Our current membership consists of 740 enrolled members.

The concerns that I'm presenting to you today by correspondence was previously presented to and endorsed by the Executive committee of the MHAEO.

Mr. Secretary this letter is in regards to the gross mismanagement of our tribal trust lands by our Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT) Business Council.

At the present time one of the largest oil leases for exploration and production has begun in western North Dakota and includes the Fort Berthold reservation. Several thousand acres of individual allotments have been leased by a multitude of companies. The market bonuses to date average \$380.00 per acre. Some leases went as high as \$1000.00 per acre.

This is our concern, the TAT Business Council has given a sole source lease contract to a company named "Dakota 3" and one of the principal executives in this company is an enrolled member and an employee of the TAT. This person is also a close friend of the TAT Chairman and a business associate of the Tribal Treasure.

Dakota 3 and the above mentioned planned and promoted a scheme that was accepted by the TAT Business Council. The council approved the plan that allowed for a sole source lease of 44,000 acres to Dakota 3 at the rate of \$50.00 per acre or 2.2 million dollars for this total acreage.


Mr. Secretary, this company, DAKOTA 3, like other companies in the oil business will turn around and re-sell the lease for no less than the present market value of \$380 to \$1,000. Even if they sold the lease at the lowest market price of \$300 per acre, the three people associated with Dakota 3 company stand to become instant millionaires from their share of \$7,000,000, leaving the TAT Business Council with a bonus of just the \$2.2 million? The losers in this scheme are the enrolled members of the TAT, who get nothing. The point I make today is that the rightful owners of all tribal trust property on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation are all the enrolled members of the TAT, young and old.

Mr. Secretary we are making a plea to you that you exercise your trust responsibilities that are clearly defined in the, "Code of Federal Regulations 25 – Indians, Chapter 23— Development of Tribal Mineral Resources, Sec. 2102. Secretary's determination on Minerals Agreements" and negate the Dakota 3 / TAT transaction and deny approval of the IMDA which is at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Regional Director's office in Aberdeen, S.D. Also we request that you mandate that all tribal trust lands be advertised in the open oil market for bid.

The concerns we share with you have been addressed to the BIA Superintendent at the Fort Berthold Agency, BIA Regional Office, Aberdeen, S.D. and the Solicitors Office, BIA Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

Mr. Secretary, your immediate action on our request will be greatly appreciated not only by our tribal elders but also the vast majority of the enrolled members of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



Russell D Mason, Sr.

Cc: Bureau of Indians – Aberdeen Regional Director
BIA – Superintendent of Fort Berthold
Chairman of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs