

# **Summary: BIA Firefighters Convicted for Intentionally Setting Wildland Fires on the Cherokee Reservation**

**Report Date: November 21, 2018**

**Report Number: 15-0177**

The OIG investigated an allegation that Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Administratively Determined (AD) firefighters intentionally set wildland fires for profit on the Cherokee Reservation in Cherokee, NC.

We found that firefighters Raymond Swayney, Grady Davis, Zachary Winchester, and three others caused or participated in several wildland arsons for profit between fiscal years 2010 and 2014, impacting hundreds of acres in Cherokee and costing the Federal Government thousands of dollars.

Swayney, Davis, and Winchester pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina. Swayney was sentenced to 21 months in prison and ordered to pay restitution of \$4,989 for violating 18 U.S.C. § 1855 (Timber Set Afire) and 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy). Davis was sentenced to 12 months of probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$926.16 for violating 18 U.S.C. § 4 (Misprision of a Felony). Winchester was sentenced to 30 days in prison, followed by 24 months of probation for violating 18 U.S.C. § 371 (Conspiracy).

At the request of the U.S. Attorney's Office, we referred the three other firefighters to Cherokee Tribal Court for their participation in starting the fires.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the BIA Director.

