

Summary: Tribal Court Employees Misused BIA Program Funds

Report Date: October 16, 2019

Report No. 18-0337

The OIG investigated allegations that a tribal chief judge and a tribal court administrator mismanaged Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract funds. Specifically, they allegedly purchased a \$44,804 vehicle that could not be located, paid a \$21,320 severance to an out-going judge who was a family member of the chief judge, and misused program funds.

We found that the chief judge improperly diverted \$44,804 of federal funds that had been allocated for the purchase of a court vehicle to cover other tribal expenses. We also confirmed the \$21,320 severance; however, the tribal chairman authorized the payment using tribal funds, not BIA program funds. Further, we found that the court administrator misused approximately \$20,520 in program funds designated for the tribal court.

The BIA was aware of the misuse of program funds and already requested reimbursement from the Tribe. The United States Attorney's Office declined prosecution of this matter. The Tribe has removed the chief judge and the court administrator from their positions.

This is a summary of an investigative report that we issued to the acting director of the BIA.

