

**The Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP) Statement Against  
the Use of Counterterrorism Tactics on Native Peoples and Allies**

Approved by the SIP Executive Committee October 4, 2017

We, the Society of Indian Psychologists and our allies, oppose the use of counterterrorism tactics primarily targeting Native American peoples and supporting allies on historical and current tribal lands without regard to their rights as citizens of the United States and their rights as humans.

We believe it is important to respond to recent reports on the operations of TigerSwan, a private security company, on behalf of Energy Transfer Partners in relation to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The reports expose alleged leaked internal TigerSwan documents containing derogatory misrepresentations of Natives. We wholeheartedly reject the categorization of a Native American-led movement as "terrorist", "inherently desperate", "volatile", inclined to "riot", "jihadist" or "violent." We further reject the same moniker being applied to our allies who came to support a Native American-led cause. We wholeheartedly reject the militarized treatment of un-armed and peaceful Water Protectors, including but not limited to monitoring and surveillance, infiltration, and aggressive "non-lethal actions".

The following references, directly from the leaked documents reported on by the Intercept, may aid the reader in understanding the relevant areas of concern:

*"Exploitation of ongoing native versus non-native rifts, and tribal rifts between peaceful and violent elements is critical in our effort to delegitimize the anti-DAPL movement."* (Internal TigerSwan Situation Report 2016-10-03 The Intercept - Jun 02, 2017)

*"The Protesters have reached a certain point of despair following up with the unexpected presidential election results. The DAPL protesters are inherently desperate and are not looking for a peaceful solution regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) in turn we can expect this situation to become more volatile than it has ever become before."* (Internal TigerSwan Situation Report 2016-11-12 The Intercept Jun 02, 2017)

*"Furthermore, the presence of additional Palestinians in the camp, and the movement's involvement with Islamic individuals is a dynamic that requires further examination. Currently there is no information to suggest terrorist type tactics or operations; however, with the current limitation on information flow out of the camp, it cannot be ruled out."* (Internal TigerSwan Situation Report 2016-09-22 The Intercept - May 26, 2017)

*"What We Think: The Standing Rock Sioux will continue to riot and attempt to force DAPL security and law enforcement to respond with violence."* (Shared Daily Intelligence Update 2016-11-05 The Intercept – May 26, 2017)

*"This is to be expected. What the anti-DAPL protesters have called an "indigenous decolonization movement" was, essentially, an externally supported, ideologically driven insurgency with a strong religious component. And, as it generally followed the jihadist*

*insurgency model while active, we can expect the individuals who fought for and supported it to follow a post-insurgency model after its collapse.*

*The archetype of a jihadist post-insurgency is the aftermath of the anti-Soviet Afghanistan jihad. While many insurgents went back to their pre-war lives, many, especially the external supporters (foreign fighters), went back out into the world looking to start or join new jihadist insurgencies...*

*...While we can expect to see the continued spread of the anti-DAPL diaspora and the proliferation of successful TTPs following the jihadist bleedout model, we are able to study the protesters' successes and failures and so improve our preparedness. Aggressive intelligence preparation of the battlefield and active coordination between intelligence and security elements are now a proven method of defeating pipeline insurgencies.”(Internal TigerSwan Situation Report 2017-02-27 The Intercept - June 21, 2017)*

This anti-terrorism terminology, now applied to Native Americans, had its origins in US operations on Middle Eastern soil, often painting entire populations of Arab countries as dangerous and antagonistic to US freedom and security. We reject this pattern of broad stroke generalization as an oppressive technique to incite fear and to demonize entire populations. Such rhetoric reinforced a racist narrative that the indigenous-led movement was a national threat to law and order, intentionally destructive and inherently violent.

In North America, there has been a history of categorically negative characterization of Native American people. Declarations of us as "savages" and "uncivilized" have been strategically used by government and media across time to further the objectives of a larger nation-state formed around original indigenous sovereign nations in order to disenfranchise rights, to objectify us, and to discourage potential allies from seeing the original inhabitants of these lands as human beings.

At Standing Rock, “non-lethal” force used by law enforcement members included rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. For example, on November 20, 2016, medics evacuated 26 Water Protectors to the area hospitals and assisted over 300 people in need of treatment for hypothermia from exposure to police water cannons in subfreezing conditions. Many more required help due to acute stress reactions and mental trauma.

Beyond the well-documented number of increasingly aggressive “non-lethal actions” used against Water Protectors engaged in direct action, and the hundreds of arrests, there were persistent efforts to try to undermine the peace and stability of the individuals in the movement. An ever-growing multi-state police force joined the National Guard presence. Federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force took an interest in the movements, actions and affiliations of Water Protectors.

The tactics used against the Water Protectors included the creation of a militarized zone, with helicopters and a Cessna plane conducting ongoing surveillance from the air. At one point, a National Guard checkpoint was set up to monitor the movements along Highway 1806. Records were developed noting make and model of cars, vehicle plate numbers and descriptions of individuals within. When the checkpoint was removed some months later, it was replaced by

Federal police cars at the intersection turnoff to Cannonball. This later evolved to become a full blockade of Highway 1806. As the movement continued, alleged high intensity spotlights were focused on the camps at night, and intelligence was gained through use of infiltrators and informants.

The influence of a third-party agent hired on behalf of Energy Transfer had its ramifications. The alleged dialogue between TigerSwan and Energy Transfer Partners identified Water Protectors and their supporters as a target worthy of investigation and as an insurgent group. We do not know the influence this had on creating a narrative that would ultimately influence police and military decisions. However, it is clear that vilifying Water Protectors created conditions that reduced the capacity to be seen as both human beings and as citizens of the United States, in order to serve the agenda and needs of a single corporation.

We have yet to know the full psychological implications of these tactics. One can easily infer that the development of a profound lack of trust in the ethics of groups participating and colluding with such behaviors would be likely. Given that a great number of Native American people participated in the movement, and that multigenerational trauma and the ongoing effects of colonialism have left their mark, it is likely to have triggered normative fear and recurrence of traumatic themes from history.

This trauma is compounded by the fact that Native American people have had the highest rates of service in the military relative to other ethnic and racial groups. The movement attracted a strong Veteran presence. Those who served this country should not have had to face psychological operations that replicated military field operations due to the impact. The range of such experiences could include being disenchanted with the unwarranted and aggressive response to a non-violent movement, to being traumatically triggered and re-experiencing painful and intrusive memories of what had been seen in military service.

Civilians in the movement would likely have developed normative paranoia and fear relative to these increasing stressors placed on them over time. It is likely that those who remained at the camps over long periods of time could begin to question who could be trusted or communicated with and develop ruminations and recurring thoughts regarding their safety. Some might find their confidence in the democratic right to protest, afforded as a self-evident truth, diminished.

Upon leaving camp, reminders of such negative experiences could result in emotional triggering. Reintegration programs often afforded to military personnel are non-existent for the Water Protectors, who have left the camps without the benefit of having adequate structure, resources or time to process such experiences. Any sense of loss, confusion or difficulty returning to their lives post-movement would be entirely natural, given that they came to the camps to support a prayerful Native American-led movement to protect the water and had never anticipated being subjected to what effectively mirrored a militarized zone.

Deliberate labeling of Water Protectors as “insurgents” legitimized the use of counterterrorist tactics. Classification, symbolization, and dehumanization are recurrent initial steps in the process of genocide. Collusion of industry with governing bodies to undermine the psychological stability of Water Protectors for the purpose of installing a pipeline is

unacceptable and disturbingly replicates genocidal stratagem. We invite our allies both within the field of psychology and outside of it to join us in rebuking such tactics as being disproportionately severe and unwarranted, and recognizing the societal implications of these behaviors.

For more information, visit our website at <https://www.aiansip.org/>

Or go directly to the document at:

<https://nebula.wsimg.com/d5d77c15d29ff6d85fd03403b0a6e28d?AccessKeyId=3BBC34B5002E1951E7BE&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

Margaret Smith, Psy.D., The Illinois School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University  
Chicago. [margsmith@argosy.edu](mailto:margsmith@argosy.edu)

Melissa Tehee, J.D., Ph.D., Utah State University. [melissa.tehee@usu.edu](mailto:melissa.tehee@usu.edu)

Adam Rose, B.A., graduate of Occidental College. [Adam.rose.ca@gmail.com](mailto:Adam.rose.ca@gmail.com)

Kee Straits, Ph.D., TLC Transformations, LLC. [tlctransformations@gmail.com](mailto:tlctransformations@gmail.com)

Brian McNeill, Ph.D., Washington State University. [mcneill@wsu.edu](mailto:mcneill@wsu.edu)