



GAO Review of Trafficking of Native American Cultural Objects

Background

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is a legislative branch agency that conducts nonpartisan, independent research for the U.S. Congress. GAO is currently reviewing federal agencies' efforts to prevent, investigate, and prosecute cases of looting, theft and trafficking of Native American cultural items, as well as efforts to repatriate certain Native American cultural items at the request of:

- Chairman Goodlatte, House Judiciary Committee
- Representative Pearce
- Representative Sensenbrenner

Federal Agencies in GAO's Review:

Department of the Interior

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Department of Agriculture

- U.S. Forest Service

Department of Defense

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Tennessee Valley Authority

Department of Justice

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys
- Office of Tribal Justice

Department of Homeland Security

Department of State

Smithsonian Institution

GAO will issue a publicly available report to Congress with possible recommendations for federal actions. Research methods include interviews with federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and tribes and tribal organizations to learn about their experiences, as well as analysis of agency data on prevention efforts, investigations, and prosecutions.

GAO Review Objectives

1. What actions, if any, have federal agencies taken to prevent the looting, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items?
2. What actions, if any, have federal agencies taken over the past 10 years to investigate and prosecute cases of looting, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items?
3. What actions, if any, have federal agencies and Native American tribes taken to repatriate Native American cultural items held in foreign collections or repositories?
4. What challenges, if any, are there regarding efforts to prevent and prosecute cases related to looting, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items and what options, if any, exist for addressing these challenges?

Topics for Discussion

GAO is interested in obtaining perspectives from tribal officials as they relate to the above research objectives. GAO would like to hear from you regarding any of the following topics:

1. To what extent, if any, has your tribe experienced instances of looting or theft?
2. To what extent has your tribe requested assistance from federal agencies related to instances of looting and trafficking or repatriation, and what has been the response or outcome?
3. To what extent has your tribe taken actions without federal agencies' assistance related to instances of looting and trafficking or repatriation, and what has been the response or outcome?
4. What challenges, if any, has your tribe experienced related to instances of looting and trafficking or repatriation?

Contact Us to Share Your Views: We sincerely appreciate any input that you provide to us. We will be available for one-on-one interviews during the NATHPO Conference on August 8, 9, and 10. To schedule a time to speak with us, please e-mail GAO-Native-American-artifacts-team@gao.gov or contact Jamie Meuwissen, Senior Analyst (202-512-4076) or Casey Brown, Analyst-in-Charge (303-572-7356).