



Narragansett Indian Tribe

P.O. Box 268

Charlestown, Rhode Island 02813

(401) 364-1100

1-800-487-4225

Via Overnight

July 23, 2003

Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft:

The Narragansett Indian Tribe, through its Chief Sachem and Tribal Council, hereby respectfully request that the Department of Justice immediately commence an investigation into an incident which occurred on Monday, July 14, 2003, on the Narragansett Indian Reservation near Charlestown, Rhode Island.

The Narragansett Indian Tribe is a federally acknowledged and recognized Indian Tribe with reservation lands held in trust by the United States. On July 12, 2003, the Tribe commenced operation of a tribal smoke shop on its reservation lands. The smoke shop is owned and operated by the Tribe with revenue generated from sales utilized to fund tribal programs for the general health, education and welfare of tribal members.

On July 14th, Rhode Island State Troopers executing a search warrant secured from a Justice of the Rhode Island State Court shut down the smoke shop. The Tribe maintains that a State search warrant is invalid under existing federal law. Tribal officials and Tribal law enforcement officers requested to see a federal warrant, none was produced. In fact despite

repeated requests the state warrant was never offered. It was at this point in the raid that Rhode Island State Troopers forcibly pushed past Tribal officials and Tribal law enforcement causing unnecessary violence to ensue which resulted in the arrest of eight (8) tribal individuals, including myself as Chief Sachem, three (3) Tribal Council members, a Tribal law enforcement officer, and a female tribal member along with her juvenile son.

The Tribe's law enforcement officers are federally trained by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and federally deputized under existing laws. The Tribe requests an investigation to determine whether federal charges are appropriate against state officials violating Tribal police authority. Further, whether in the process of executing the search warrant Rhode Island State Police did violate the civil rights of tribal and, perhaps, non-tribal individuals.

I would respectfully request an opportunity to meet with you and members of your staff on this very important matter pertaining to the federally protected sovereign rights of the Narragansett Indian Tribe but also the individual civil rights of tribal members and whether any criminal misconduct occurred as a direct result of the actions of the Rhode Island State Police on July 14th.

You may contact my office at (401) 364-1100 at ext. 214.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Thomas", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas