



MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff



News Release

For Immediate Release

October 28, 2016

Contact: Morton County PIO (701) 426-1587 or (701) 595-3596

Link to pictures and video: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BzEKNLJqG3cwdIUzdkRUelNQVm8>

Law Enforcement Hold Line at Bridge North of Main Camp

Mandan, N.D. – Law enforcement continues to have a presence near the Backwater Bridge north of the main camp area in southern Morton County. This location was the site of very tense interactions through the night, with protesters setting multiple fires on the bridge. Pictures illustrating the destruction of the bridge are included in the link provided. The bridge and Highway 1806 remain closed due to the damage and debris on the bridge. According to the North Dakota Department of Transportation, the bridge is unsafe for anyone to cross until all damage to the structure is evaluated.

Officers are currently holding a line north of the bridge, to prevent protesters from moving north. Protesters have gathered on the bridge and refused to leave the active crime scene. Camp representatives have been working with law enforcement attempting to disperse the protesters. At this time protesters have been non-confrontational but uncooperative in responding to law enforcement's requests.

"We request individuals here to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline to remain at the 7 Councils Fire Camp if they wish to continue lawful and peaceful activities. We thank also thank the Standing Rock tribal members and members of the 7 Councils Fire Camp for assisting with de-escalating the situation at the Backwater Bridge." said Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier.

After law enforcement cleared the private property where protesters had established an encampment, the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation processed the crime scene. The north camp has now been turned over to the Morton County Sheriff's Department. Sheriff

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Kirchmeier reached out to tribal representatives and has allowed them to be escorted into the north camp to respectfully remove the teepee's.

Kirchmeier added, "This is a great example of communication, collaboration and cooperation."

Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier expressed great pride and respect for the officers who worked to clear private property and an illegal roadblock occupied by individuals protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. "I am very proud of our officers when you look at what took place Thursday, law enforcement responded with patience and professionalism and showed continuous restraint throughout the entire event," said Kirchmeier.

During one of the arrests, a woman fired multiple shots at the police line. Officers were not injured. That was just one of the violent encounters with law enforcement. During the course of the event that started Thursday morning, protesters have thrown Molotov Cocktails (homemade explosives) at officers. Two officers received minor injuries after being hit by logs and other debris.

There were several incidents of intermediate and less-than lethal weapons used in the field due to non-compliance and acts of aggression by protesters. Officers responded to the escalated violent and illegal actions by using: pepper spray, bean-bag and sponge rounds, a device which transmits a loud bang noise and an LRAD which transmits a high-pitch tone and one instance of a Taser being deployed after a protester threw pepper in an officers' face. Officers used all these protective measures as a way to minimize the threats and protect themselves.

Protesters set numerous fires to vehicles and other debris, at least nine vehicles plus construction equipment was torched.

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Law enforcement continues to investigate a shooting that was reported north of the camp late Thursday afternoon.

More than sixty vehicles parked on private property and along 1806 we towed as a result of the clearing of that area Thursday. Owners of those vehicles are urged to contact Ace Towing to retrieve their vehicle.

An additional person was arrested early Friday bringing the total arrests from this event to 142. The total number of protesters who have been arrested for illegal protest acts since August 10th is 411.

Pictures of the damage, the vacated north camp and officer response are provided at the link on the top of the release.

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