



# ***MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT***

*Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff*



## **News Release**

For Immediate Release

November 2, 2016

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

Morton website: <http://www.co.morton.nd.us/>

Pictures & Videos from 11-2 incident linked here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BzEKNLJqG3cwVG1BU0tURGpiMHM>

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gives Permission to Local Law Enforcement to Remove Illegal Bridge & Trespassers**

Mandan, N.D. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requested the Morton County Sheriff's Department to assist them in removing any trespassers who enter Corps land to the north of the main camp area. Law enforcement witnessed protesters building an illegal, man-made, wooden bridge across the Cantapeta Creek. This is located east of 1806 and the Backwater Bridge at the confluence of the Cannonball River. Protesters involved in building the bridge violated numerous federal and state laws including the Clean Water Act and the Safe River and Harbors Act.

Law enforcement responded to the shoreline on the north side of the creek. Officers ordered protesters to remove themselves from the bridge and notified them that if they crossed the bridge they would be arrested for trespassing. This order was repeated several times.

Law enforcement with boats were able to pull the make-shift bridge apart. Numerous protesters continued to ignore officer's commands and crossed the river by swimming, using boats, canoes and kayaks. The stand-off with officers concluded shortly before 2:00 p.m. when protesters retreated and returned to the main camp area.

A statement from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave Morton County law enforcement "permission to go onto USACE land to prevent further campsites from developing and threatening public safety."

"Receiving permission and precise guidance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was uplifting today. This simple message gave a clear cut order to execute a plan to remove unlawful actors and prevent further unlawful actions," said Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier. "Eighty five days into the protests, we look forward to other federal government agencies following the Corps' spirit of providing support and assistance to law enforcement."

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Law enforcement arrested one individual who was aiding in illegal activity by purchasing canoes and kayaks to be used for crossing the waterway. He was arrested for conspiracy to commit obstruction of a government function.

Authorities used less-than-lethal ammunition to control the situation. In one incident a male was at a boat and was throwing bottles at officers on the police line. A second incident occurred when a man wearing a gas mask, refused to show his hands, refused to disperse and charged the police line. Officers also deployed pepper spray and tear gas to disperse the group of protesters who came across the water and camp at officers. No lethal shots were fired from law enforcement.

The FBI and BIA are following up on a report of an individual being hog-tied and detained by "camp security" and being brought to the BIA checkpoint. There were also reports of gunfire in the camp, BIA responded and is investigating that report as well.

"In my 27 years in law enforcement, I have never seen such an absolute disregard for the law, or other people's rights because of someone else's ideology. The idea that because you have a strong opinion about something means you can threaten, harass and intimidate other American citizens is just plain wrong. I took an oath to protect the first amendment, but I also took an oath to protect citizens from this continual harassment and intimidation," said Cass County Sheriff Paul Laney.

The Morton County Sheriff's Department will release more information as it becomes available.

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