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LAW ENFORCEMENT SCALES BACK AS CLEANUP FINISHES AT PROTEST CAMPS

BY CAROLINE GRUESKIN - BISMARCK TRIBUNE

Law enforcement is scaling back its presence as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finishes cleaning the pipeline protest camps.

Fewer than 70 officers, mostly from Morton County and North Dakota Highway Patrol, now report to the main law enforcement base at Fort Rice on a daily basis, according to Morton County spokesman Rob Keller. That's down from 100 to 200 this fall.

The National Guard has about 75 people deployed here, compared to 500 at the height in November, according to spokeswoman Maj. Amber Balken. Guardsmen assisted law enforcement with traffic, morale checks and clearing the main camp.

Similarly, the state Department of Health now only dispatches two to three people daily to serve food at the base, according to Tim Wiedrich, emergency preparedness section chief. In the fall, there were usually 32 people on a shift providing medical and food services.

Parts of the sizable "forward operating base" are being dismantled as numbers drop, but Keller said there was not yet a set date to close the camp, which still costs about \$210,000 weekly to run.

He said officers are remaining there while cleanup of the road is completed and until there is assurance Dakota Access Pipeline protesters will not return to disrupt pipeline construction or move onto private property.

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TODAY'S QUOTE
 THOSE WHO DO NOT
 REMEMBER THE PAST
 ARE CONDEMNED TO
 REPEAT IT.



PHOTO BY MIKE MCCLEARY - BISMARCK TRIBUNE

Law enforcement entered the Oceti Sakowin camp on Feb. 23 to begin arresting the last Dakota Access Pipeline protesters in Morton County near Cannon Ball. As the arrests were underway, law enforcement personnel drove several large construction equipment into the camp to begin the cleanup process of razing tents and structures before hired contractors took over.

The company has said the pipeline could operate as early as next week, though the tribe is asking a federal judge to halt the flow of oil pending an appeal.

Law enforcement leaders have not yet finalized a date to reopen the Backwater Bridge to general traffic, Keller said. A routine meeting was held Monday morning and will convene again Wednesday to discuss the issue.

Members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe have said the months-long bridge closure hurts their local economy, especially the Prairie Knights Casino, and access to medical services.

There remains some cleanup on the road to do, according to Keller. Contractors are pulling some debris from the ditches and some signage is being added near the pipeline construction site.

The state Department of Transportation is working to clear the road of ice, snow and mud tracked onto the road by contractors moving debris out of the camps, according to spokeswoman Jamie Olson.

On Friday, a Florida-based contractor finished cleaning the corps-managed camps, according to spokesman Capt. Ryan Hignight. This includes the Sacred Stone, Oceti Sakowin and Rosebud camps.

A total of 835 roll-off dumpsters were removed from the camps, he said. They worked with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to remove culturally significant items and to hand over some reusable materials, including raw lumber and propane tanks.

In the spring, the Oahe project office will reseed the land and replace damaged fencing, he said.

GEORGE SANTAYANA
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The final corps costs have not yet been counted. The cleanup contract, with all options, was awarded at \$1.1 million, Hignight said.

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