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Contact: Tanya Harris Joshua 202-208-6008

Tanya_Joshua@ios.doi.gov

Assistant Secretary Kia'aina to Make First Official Visit to American Samoa; *Will recognize military service and cultural traditions on Veterans Day*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 7, 2014) – Beginning next week, Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina will make her first official visit to the southernmost U.S. territory of American Samoa, where she will meet with government, traditional, private sector and community leaders and deliver remarks in honor of veterans and service members on Veterans Day.

The Assistant Secretary will begin her first visit to American Samoa by meeting with Governor Lolo Moliga, Paramount Chiefs, and Senate, House and Judiciary leadership prior to being welcomed in a traditional Samoan Ava ceremony. Hosted and presided over by the Matai (Chiefs), the Ava ceremony is the highest form of respect and traditional welcome reserved to honor dignitaries and mark special occasions.

To recognize and honor the hundreds of active military currently serving and estimated thousands of veterans in American Samoa, Assistant Secretary Kia'aina will deliver remarks on Veterans Day. The Assistant Secretary will also speak to a group of students participating in the Executive Leadership Development Program, an initiative funded by the Office of Insular Affairs to build and strengthen leadership potential of mid-level career officials in the territories and freely associated states.

Assistant Secretary Kia'aina will meet with numerous government officials to discuss a wide variety of topics such as the role of the tuna industry in American Samoa's economy, health and education, alternative energy development to reduce fossil fuel dependency, natural resources management, and climate change. She will also be meeting with the Chamber of Commerce Board and the Board of Higher Education.

The Assistant Secretary will tour the American Samoa National Park, the site of the Tamaligi tree eradication initiative recently recognized by the Secretary of the Interior with a Partners in Conservation award. Her trip also includes visits to the Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital, schools,

health dispensaries and other government facilities on both Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands. Some of her site visits will include various projects funded by Technical Assistance and Capital Improvement Projects through the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA).

The Assistant Secretary, on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, is responsible for coordinating federal policy with respect to the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance provided to the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs whose mission is to foster economic opportunities, promote government efficiency, and improve the quality of life for the people of the insular areas.

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