



OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov/oia
News Release

Date: April 3, 2015

Contact: Tanya Harris Joshua 202-208-6008

Tanya_Joshua@ios.doi.gov

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to Receive
\$670,000 in Technical Assistance Funding for
FY 2015 Priorities**

*To Review Draft Environmental Impact Statement related to Tinian and Pagan,
Carryout Household Income and Expenditure Survey, and Train Auditors*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 3, 2015) – Today Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina announced \$670,000 in Technical Assistance Program grant funding from the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) to the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to support priority needs identified by Governor Eloy Inos.

Funds from the Office of Insular Affairs will be used to assess the impact of proposed military activities on the islands of Tinian and Pagan, conduct a 2015 Household Income and Expenditure Survey last conducted ten years ago, and provide training for the Office of the Public Auditor as part of collaborative efforts with the Department of the Interior’s Inspector General.

“I am confident that these initial projects will provide timely and critical information, analyses, and data for CNMI decision-makers,” said Assistant Secretary Esther Kia’aina. “These funds will help them make informed decisions on the proposed military activities, assess their economic development and self-sufficiency needs, and build capacity needed to strengthen governance and accountability.”

The Commonwealth Joint Military Training Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Report Assessment: \$275,000 to the Office of the Governor to hire an environmental consulting firm to review the DEIS which is anticipated to be released in April 2015. The review will cover the impact of proposed military activities on the use of ground water aquifers,

potential alteration to coral reef habitats, and historical and cultural sites, including the impact on socioeconomic aspects such as noise pollution, airspace restrictions, public safety, and impact of residents on the islands of Tinian and Pagan. As part of the effort to rebalance military forces in the Asia Pacific region, the U.S. military has proposed to increase joint military training capabilities through live-fire ranges and training areas on Tinian and Pagan.

The 2015 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES): \$307,672 to the CNMI Department of Commerce to obtain, compile, and disseminate data on household income and expenditures in the Northern Mariana Islands and to provide cost effective economic indicators, data, and performance measures related to economic development and self-sufficiency needs. Last completed in 2005, the HIES project is long overdue, given that the once-prominent garment industry has folded and the customs and immigration has been taken over by the U.S. federal government. The HIES will also provide information about the current labor force to include data on U.S.-qualified vs. foreign workers, characteristics of wage earners, including those earning minimum wages, and impacts of migrants under the Compacts of Free Association.

Office of the Public Auditor Training Program: \$87,385 to the CNMI Office of the Public Auditor to improve the quality of their audit and investigative capacity, upgrade hardware and software needed for investigative storage and security. This funding also supports the continued partnership established in 2012 between the Office of the Public Auditor and Interior's Office of the Inspector General to provide technical assistance and training to strengthen and promote efficient and effective governance in the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the Secretary's responsibilities for the U.S. territories, including American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Additional responsibilities include administration and oversight of federal assistance provided to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau under the Compacts of Free Association.

###