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Interior Secretary Kempthorne Convenes Insular Areas Health Summit

*Veterans Affairs Secretary Peake, DOD Under Secretary Chu,
HHS Assistant Secretary Garcia to Join Island Leaders*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced today that he is bringing together senior-level federal health officials and the leaders of the U.S. territories and freely associated states to find ways to improve health care for those communities.

Joining Kempthorne at the Sept. 29-30, 2008 Insular Areas Health Summit will be Secretary of Veterans Affairs James B. Peake; Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu; Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Health Joxel Garcia, M.D.; Gov. Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa; Gov. Felix Camacho of Guam; Gov. Ben Fitial of the Northern Mariana Islands; U.S. Virgin Islands Health Commissioner Vivian Ebbesen Fludd; Lt. Gov. James Aiona of Hawaii; President Manny Mori of the Federated States of Micronesia; President Litokwa Tomeing of the Marshall Islands; and Vice President Elias Chin of Palau. Also participating are USVI Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen, M.D., and American Samoa's Delegate to Congress Eni F.H. Faleomavaega.

“The federal government has a responsibility to help our territories and freely associated states meet the challenges they face in providing quality health care for their people,” Kempthorne said. “Whether the challenge is education, funding, equipment, personnel, training or facilities, we must work to build partnerships and expand programs, leverage resources and develop strategies to help island leaders improve and expand their public health services.”

“The Future of Health Care in the Insular Areas: A Leaders’ Summit” will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Honolulu, Hawaii. Summit participants will also include federal, state and island officials responsible for health care in the Insular Areas as well as private health care professionals and private organizations. On Sept. 29, the opening session begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Kona Moku Ballroom; a news conference will be held in the Oahu Room at 12:15 p.m. and a working lunch will be held in the Waikiki Ballroom.

Discussion topics and presentations will include the challenges and opportunities in

- Serving Island Communities: Island Health Officials;

- Telehealth in Insular Areas: Remote Communication with Health Care Professionals for Services and Information;
- Addressing Critical Shortages (Personnel, Equipment and Infrastructure): Capacity Building and Quality Assurance Programs, Partnerships, Engaging Volunteers;
- Caring for America's Military Heroes and Public Services: The Role of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran's Affairs in Addressing Military and Veterans Health Care in the U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States; Partnerships for Services to Civilians.

Credentialed media wishing to cover the summit and those wishing to schedule interviews with participants during or after the conference should contact Frank Quimby, Office of Communications, at 202-208-7291, frank_quimby@ios.doi.gov

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