Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Donald E. "Del" Laverdure has expressed his sincere condolences to the family of fallen Bureau of Indian Affairs wildland firefighter Anthony Polk, who was killed in the line of duty on June 8. His remarks were conveyed in a letter to the Polk family that will be read at a memorial service being held this afternoon on the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation in southwestern Arizona.

Polk, 30, a resident of Yuma, Ariz., and a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe with ancestry from the Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Reservation, died in a tragic one-vehicle accident while on assignment at the Montezuma fire. He was serving as an Engine Boss when the accident occurred.

Speaking on behalf of the Department of the Interior, the acting Assistant Secretary said, "Anthony was well known and respected by those who knew him inside the Forestry community and among those who fight in the dangerous wildland fire zones. We honor Anthony for his commitment and service to protecting those whose lives and property are threatened by wildland fire. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him."

Polk served as a firefighter for 10 years at the BIA's Fort Yuma Agency before becoming the leader of the Agency's Prescribed Fire Operations and Fuels Program. Through that program, he worked with Interior agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; other federal agencies including the U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and numerous local fire departments.

An interagency Serious Accident Investigative Team is looking into the cause of the accident, and more information will be released as it becomes available.

Andrew Polk was a 1999 graduate of San Pasqual Valley High School in Winterhaven, Calif. He is survived by his immediate family: daughter Aiyana; mother Ramona Villa; siblings Manuel, Alex and Raquel Villa; and grandmother Lucinda Polk. The family has requested that cards be sent to the Polk Family at 673 Baseline Road, Winterhaven, California, 92283, and donations to the AEA Federal Credit Union in Yuma County under the name Anthony Polk and donation account number 1613510-010.

The memorial service is scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m. local time at the Quechan Community Center. A wake is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on Friday, June 15, at the Yuma Mortuary Chapel followed by funeral services at 5:00 p.m. at Cry House in Winterhaven.

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