Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: January 27, 1989
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The Department of the Interior today announced the resignation of Ross Swimmer, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Last November he tendered his resignation to then President Reagan and in a recent letter to Secretary Don Hodel made it official as of January 29.

"I believe we have moved the agenda forward for a real change in Indian country," he wrote Hodel. "Certainly, there is a new awareness of what the problems are and the solutions to those problems. This is a convenient time for me to leave and rejoin my family in Tulsa, (Oklahoma)," he said.

Hodel recently awarded Swimmer the Department's highest citation and gold medal for his "invaluable counsel and leadership in support of this Nation's government-to-government relationship with Native Americans." In presenting the Outstanding Service Award, Hodel said: "His unswerving faith in the inherent abilities and talents of Native Americans has resulted in policies that provide Indians with the opportunity to truly control their own destinies." Hodel called special attention to Swimmer's initiatives to improve education and economic development on Indian lands, and his efforts to increase tribal control over federal funding provided to their governments. The citation also notes that Swimmer initiated a much-improved program for administering Indian trust funds that "will ensure the maximum return and flexibility to the trustees and provide the highest caliber of investment advice."

Swimmer, 45, a former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, has been assistant secretary since December 5, 1985.

Earl Gjelde, acting secretary of the Interior, has named William P. Ragsdale, currently deputy to the assistant secretary (Operations), to serve as acting assistant secretary until a new assistant secretary has been nominated by President Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.