

**Statement by John Learie Estrada  
Ambassador-Designate to Trinidad and Tobago  
before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Tuesday, August 4, 2:30 p.m.**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee: Good Afternoon.

It is an honor to appear before you today. I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me through their re-nomination of me to represent my country as the next Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am particularly thrilled at the prospect of representing the United States, if confirmed, in the country of my birth. I was born in Trinidad and Tobago and, at age fourteen, I immigrated to the United States to forge a new life. I brought with me a respect for diversity and an inherent sense of the equal value of all people. I served with honor in the U.S. Marine Corps -- attaining the Corps' highest enlisted rank as the 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. After retiring from the Marine Corps, I continued serving my country as a Presidential-appointed Commission member of the American Battle Monuments Commission and as a committee member on the Defense Advisory Committee for Women in the Services. In the private sector, I led Lockheed Martin Training Solutions, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary company specializing in flight training and logistics solutions.

I firmly believe that one of the greatest aspirations of all free people is to live their lives to the fullest without limitations based on their ethnicity, class, race, gender, or sexual orientation. If confirmed as Ambassador, with that ideal as my guide, I

would seek to strengthen the ties between the citizens and elected representatives of our two great nations.

Trinidad and Tobago is an important Caribbean partner of the United States. The relationship between our countries rests on a strong foundation. We share a common language and a firm commitment to democratic principles, the rule of law, and a free market system.

The U.S. Mission to Trinidad and Tobago has three strategic objectives: On security, the Mission first works to protect American citizens in Trinidad and Tobago. Related to the security of Americans, the Embassy works with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to improve the capacity of Trinidadian law enforcement and justice sector institutions to reduce violent crime and illicit trafficking, safeguard human rights, and create safer communities. Second, the Mission promotes increased commerce and a transparent investment climate to enhance our mutual prosperity. Third, on social inclusion, the Mission conducts extensive outreach and encourages regional leadership by Trinidad and Tobago to protect vulnerable populations, including at-risk youth. If confirmed, I look forward to leading our efforts in these crucial areas.

The United States and Caribbean partners have developed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), an ongoing, multi-faceted citizen security initiative for the Caribbean, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a key player. In creating CBSI, the United States and Caribbean partners, we are attempting to combat the drug trade and other transnational crimes that threaten regional security with the goal of substantially reducing illicit trafficking, increasing public safety, strengthening the rule of law, and addressing the underlying, social and economic root causes of

crime. I will do my utmost, if confirmed, to increase cooperation and encourage Trinidad and Tobago to take more of a leadership role in security in the Caribbean, where it has much to offer its neighbors.

As a resource-rich country, Trinidad and Tobago is full of opportunity for energy companies. The United States works cooperatively with Trinidad and Tobago, both bilaterally and through the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative, to develop new avenues for regional energy security and conservation. I am excited Trinidad and Tobago is playing a growing role in regional integration and promoting business relationships in the hemisphere. If confirmed, I would advocate on behalf of U.S. companies and commercial interests to assure a level playing field and support their engagement with Trinidad and Tobago.

Education is the foundation for economic growth. If confirmed, I will work with the government of Trinidad and Tobago to explore ways in which we can provide at-risk youth and other vulnerable populations with tools that can help them succeed.

I firmly believe that my service in the Marine Corps and my experience in the private sector, coupled with my personal history, have prepared me to represent the government and people of the United States to the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago.

If confirmed, it would be my great honor to work closely with this committee and others in Congress to advance our shared objectives in the Caribbean.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee. I look forward to answering your questions