

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE
JONATHAN FARRAR
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
June 8, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Nicaragua. I am deeply grateful to the President and to the Secretary of State for their trust and confidence.

I would like to introduce the members of my family who are with me today, and mention those who are not. First my wife, Terry, who has been with me every step of the way through 30 years of Foreign Service life, and who has made innumerable personal sacrifices along the way. Also with us today are our daughter Melissa and son-in-law Jason, and our son Jonathan and daughter-in-law Leigh. Our youngest son, Nathaniel, is studying in Nanjing, China and could not join us.

As a career member of the Foreign Service, I have had the privilege to serve my country in various capacities covering the Western Hemisphere over the past 30 years. My career has taken our family throughout the Americas. In Washington, I have had the opportunity to work on Latin American policy and programs on human rights, democracy, law enforcement, trade, investment, non-proliferation, and other areas.

My interest in Latin America truly began in 1973 in Xalapa, Veracruz on a sister-city student exchange program. It was a life changing experience. Today, 38 years later, I still am in touch with the family who took me in and taught me more about Mexico than I ever could have learned in a textbook.

If confirmed as Ambassador of the United States to Nicaragua, I would be accredited to the government. But the most important ties between our countries are those forged between our citizens. If confirmed, I would bring to our mission my experience working with civil society in Latin America and an unwavering commitment to finding avenues to connect with the Nicaraguan people to advance U.S. interests and reflect U.S. values.

If confirmed, my highest priority would be the protection of U.S. citizens, including the embassy community. I would work diligently with U.S. businesses to promote their exports and protect their investments, and would bring to that challenge my experience from three assignments as an economic and commercial officer overseas. Bilateral trade between the United States and Nicaragua has grown by two-thirds in the five years since the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement went into effect, yet Nicaragua has a more than one billion dollar trade surplus with the United States. If confirmed I would work with U.S. businesses -- small, medium, and large -- to increase U.S. exports to help redress that imbalance.

Nicaragua's presidential elections are scheduled for this November. The United States and others in the international community have encouraged Nicaragua to facilitate observation of those elections by credible domestic and international organizations. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with members of this Committee and your colleagues in the Congress to shape appropriate U.S. policies in the lead-up to those elections and afterwards.

Along with the rest of Central America, Nicaragua faces considerable challenges in combating illegal drug trafficking. Our Central America Regional Security Initiative and other bilateral programs offer tools to work with the Nicaraguan government, private sector, and NGOs to combat these challenges. In a prior assignment, I had the honor of participating in the signing of our bilateral agreement to establish the International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador. If confirmed, I would bring my experience with law enforcement and counternarcotics programs in Latin America and adapt it to the particular environment in Nicaragua.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the honor of appearing before the committee today. Should I be confirmed, I pledge to serve our country to the best of my ability and thus repay in at least a small way the many benefits which it has bestowed upon me and my family.

I would be pleased to answer any questions which you may have.