

**HUGO LLORENS**  
**OPENING WRITTEN TESTIMONY**  
**US SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**CONFIRMATION HEARING**  
**April 16, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lugar, Senators... I am truly honored to appear before you as President Bush's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence President Bush and Secretary Rice have placed in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the members of this Committee and the Congress as appropriate to advance U.S. interests in Honduras.

I would like to take a moment, Mr. Chairman, to acknowledge my wife Lisett. She has been my life partner for 25 years and a dedicated representative of our country in seven overseas postings. My son, Andrew, a student at Loyola University in New Orleans, and Dirk, who is living with us in Madrid, could not be here today. I consider myself fortunate to have my family's constant love and support.

I came to this great nation with my family 46 years ago as a 7 year old Cuban refugee. We arrived with a suitcase in hand and a buffalo nickel in our pocket, but knew we were richly blessed by America's freedoms. We worked hard and had an unquenchable faith in America as the land where dreams come true. It is difficult to convey in words how proud I am to have been given an opportunity to serve

my adopted land these many years and what a profoundly humbling experience it is to be in the presence of this Committee today.

I have been a career Foreign Service Officer for 27 years. I am a Latin America hand by trade having served in challenging assignments in Bolivia, Paraguay, El Salvador Honduras, and most recently as DCM in Argentina. In the four years I served in Honduras, I traveled the length and breadth of the country and I know the land and its people. I've had the privilege of working Latin America issues in Washington at State and the NSC. In my current posting as DCM in Madrid I am well grounded on European perspectives on Latin America and our Embassy cooperates on these issues with our Spanish counterparts. If confirmed, I will bring both the regional and executive experience to lead our diplomatic team in Honduras.

If I am confirmed, a top priority will be the security of the 7,000 Americans residents in Honduras and the 60,000 who travel to the country each year. This begins with the safety of our Embassy staff and their families and the service men and women who work with our Honduran hosts at the Soto Cano air base.

Honduras has been a faithful and longstanding friend of the United States. This year, Honduras will celebrate its 28<sup>th</sup> year of unbroken civilian and constitutional rule and will hold elections for a new President in November 2009. The U.S. mission I hope to lead will work closely with the

current and future government in a spirit of friendship, cooperation and respect.

Our hemispheric policy is based on consolidating democracy, promoting prosperity, investing in people and protecting the security of the democratic state. Our key issues in Honduras include the rule of law and good governance, regional security, and economic development.

If confirmed, I will support our common efforts to dismantle narcotics and human trafficking organizations. I will work to increase economic opportunities and enable democracy to address the dramatic social obstacles Honduras faces, especially poverty and marginalization that contribute to insecurity. Criminal organizations and gangs threaten our neighbors and it is in our national interest to strengthen the capabilities of the Honduran police and security forces. If approved, the Merida Initiative will be a multifaceted tool to partner with our Central American allies to build a regional strategy against crime and terrorism. In addition, I will support Honduran initiatives to revitalize the judicial system and ensure that the fight against lawlessness and impunity is done in full adherence to the law and respect for individual human rights.

If confirmed, I will support Honduran efforts to take full advantage of the Millennium Challenge Corporation's compact signed in 2005 that provides \$215 million for building roads, as well as promoting rural development. I also will seek to deepen the two-way trade and investment flows derived from the CAFTA-DR. We have a solid

record of programs with the Honduran people thanks to the work of USAID and the Peace Corps, which has one of the largest programs in the world in Honduras. We also have many public-private partnerships with U.S. organizations. I will vigorously support these programs and all efforts to deepen our engagement with the Government and people of Honduras.

I would also encourage Committee members and staff to visit Honduras. When U.S. Senators and staff travel overseas, we are given an enormous opportunity to advance our bipartisan agenda with our democratic partners. If confirmed, I will look forward to welcoming the members of this Committee and other Senators and Congresspersons to Tegucigalpa.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you again for granting me the honor of appearing before you today and respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of my nomination. I pledge to you that I will work hard and to the best of my ability in Honduras to represent our great nation.

Thank you very much.

