

Statement of Adrienne S. O'Neal
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Cape Verde
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

October 5, 2011

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Isakson, and Members of the Committee, I am here today as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Cape Verde. I am honored and grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for this tremendous vote of confidence and for this opportunity to appear before you.

The ten islands that compose the Republic of Cape Verde lie just 300 miles from the west coast of Africa. In stark contrast to the countries in its neighborhood, Cape Verde boasts an unbroken tradition of civilian rule since its independence in 1975. It is a wonderful African success story of progress toward lasting political stability and the creation of functional democratic institutions.

Cape Verde's relationship with the United States has been strong since we opened our first consulate there in 1818. Today, with more than 450,000 Americans of Cape Verdean origin, we can truly say that Americans from Cape Verde participate fully in our most treasured traditions and safeguard our most heartfelt values. One of the most salient examples of

this is the late George Lima, an American of Cape Verdean descent who was among the ranks of the celebrated Tuskegee Airmen in the Second World War.

From the platform of the deep affinity between our two countries, the United States engages with Cape Verde on a number of serious challenges. Among them, maritime security and transnational crime are key. The country's vast territorial waters and its strategic position to north-south sea routes made it a natural to host NATO's first live military exercise in Africa in 2006. The Government of Cape Verde has strongly supported counter-narcotics maneuvers and is a willing host to U.S. ship visits. In this regard, Cape Verde is a model in the region for strategic partnership. If confirmed, it is my goal to maintain and enhance this multilateral and inter-agency collaboration.

U.S engagement in support of Cape Verde's economic and commercial development has yielded encouraging results. Cape Verde's first Millennium Challenge Compact was successfully completed in 2010, producing significant gains in all three of its projects, namely: 1) improvements in transportation networks facilitating integration of internal markets; 2) improvements in water management and soil conservation, which promoted increases in farms profits and incomes; and, 3) support to

Cape Verdean microfinance institutions. Cape Verde's continued strong governance performance resulted in its selection as the first country to qualify for a second Millennium Challenge Compact. It is my hope, if confirmed, to engage Cape Verde in consolidating these gains.

Peace Corps activities have contributed to strengthening Cape Verde's civil society since 1988. The fifty plus volunteers currently serving across seven islands work with the Cape Verdean government to enhance the teaching of English as a second language, train English Language instructors, and develop small enterprise and entrepreneurship. If confirmed, I intend to build upon Peace Corps successes to encourage higher education opportunities and stimulate small business development with U.S. partners.

Mr. Chairman, prior assignments to U.S. missions in Lusophone nations, Portugal, Brazil, and Mozambique, have equipped me with the cultural knowledge and language skills to connect smoothly with the Cape Verdean government and people. Similarly, if confirmed, I will draw upon expertise gained in positions of leadership I have held throughout my 28-year tenure in the Foreign Service to address the peculiar challenges entailed in managing the U.S. Mission in Cape Verde. These include a small and crowded workspace and the mentoring of entry-level officers who staff the

majority of the Embassy's positions. In addition, if confirmed, I intend to uphold and execute the primary responsibility of every United States Embassy, which is to promote the safety and welfare of Americans citizens abroad.

I would now be pleased to answer any of your questions.