

PRESS RELEASE



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**EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION**

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U.S. military commander begins first Caribbean visit in Port of Spain

[U.S. Marine Corps General John Kelly](#), former Senior Military Advisor to [U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta](#), will arrive in Port of Spain tomorrow (Feb 5) on his first official visit to the Caribbean since assuming the leadership of [U.S. Southern Command](#) on November 19, 2012. He will meet with top defense and civilian leaders to discuss the cooperative security ties and collaborative efforts between the two countries' defense forces.

Kelly is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Dookeran, Minister of National Security Austin Jack Warner, and Chief of Defense Staff, Maj. Gen. Kenrick Maharaj.

Chief among his goals for the visit will be to hear the perspectives, interests and ideas of Trinidad and Tobago's senior leaders, as well as express to them the interest of U.S. Southern Command and the United States in fostering continued regional engagement, capacity building and security cooperation.

Kelly's schedule will include a tour of local Air Guard facilities, as well as a meeting with U.S. government leaders at the U.S. Embassy to discuss his command's support to the [Caribbean Basin Security Initiative](#) and U.S.-Trinidad and Tobago relations.

Military cooperation between the two nations contributes to strong bilateral partnerships and increased collaboration with other Western Hemisphere and international countries.

In recent years, U.S. Southern Command worked closely with the Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force to co-host the [2011 Caribbean Nations Security Conference](#) and the 2011 regional humanitarian assistance exercise, [Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias](#).

Both organizations have actively participated in countless exchanges and engagements covering key capabilities of mutual interest such as aviation, maritime security, disaster readiness, logistics and military support to law enforcement operations against transnational organized crime.

Kelly's next stop during his Caribbean visit will be in Jamaica.

U.S. Southern Command is one of six U.S. geographically-focused [unified commands](#) with responsibility for U.S. military operations and security cooperation with partner nations in the Caribbean, Central America and South America.



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