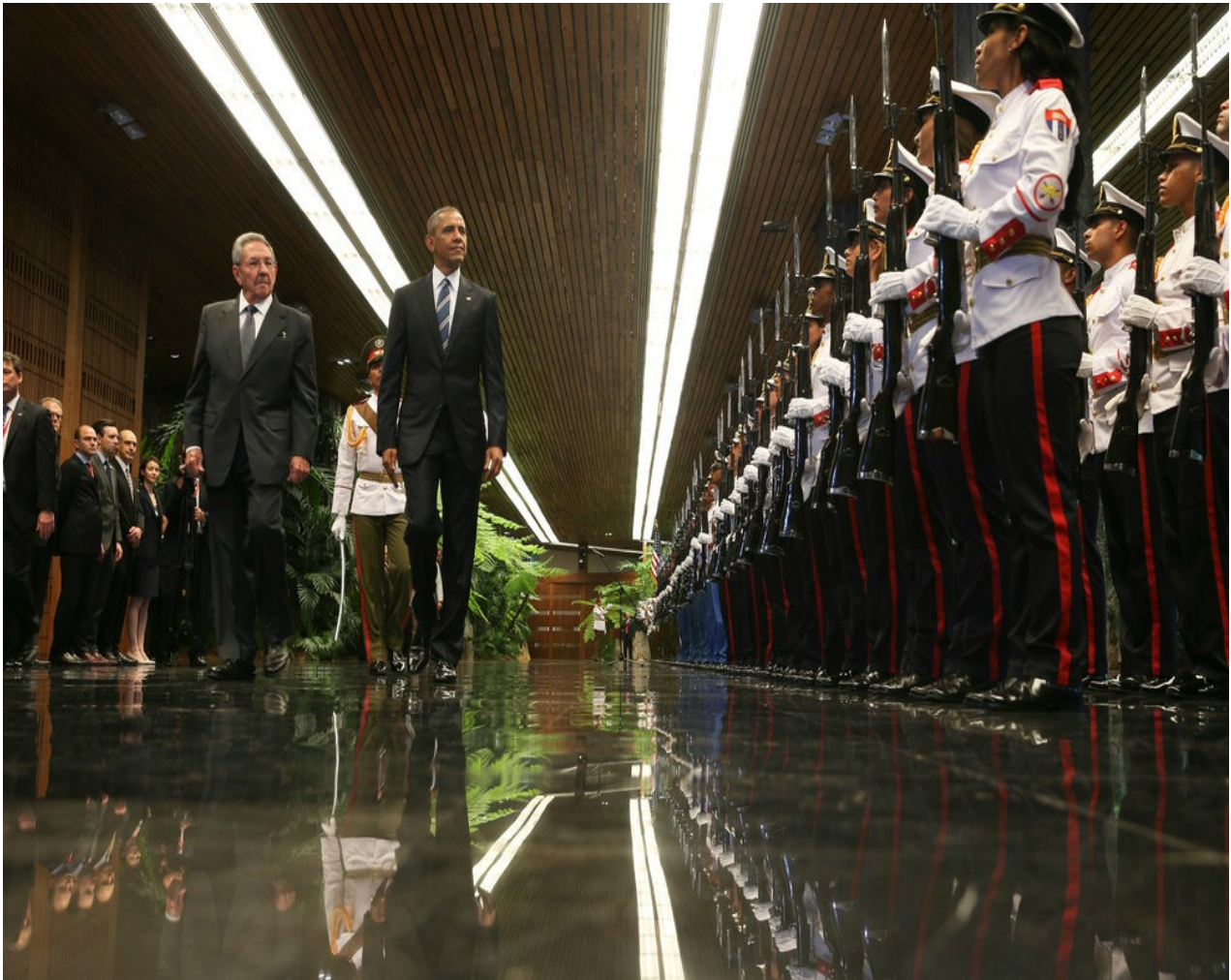


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Plaskett's Refusal Of Obama's Invite To Cuba Is Costly Miscalculation

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Freshman Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett [defeated](#) former senator and overwhelming favorite to win the congressional battle, Shawn Michael-Malone, during the 2014 Elections. She had promised to thrust unrelentingly forward, reaching across the aisle to win both Democratic and Republican support in her quest to better the fortunes of the Virgin Islands, by pressing for the allocation of more funds to satisfy many of the islands' needs.

But the congresswoman's [snub](#) of President Barack Obama's invite to travel with him during his historic trip to Cuba, which Ms. Plaskett said was due to a previously scheduled panel discussion here with members of Congress and business executives in

the technology sector, is a mistake that will have a lasting, if not permanent effect on Ms. Plaskett's efforts to win support from the Obama administration.

The delegate to Congress had made it abundantly clear her dissatisfaction with Mr. Obama's efforts in Cuba, while the Virgin Islands, she says, have been neglected for far too long. However, in refusing Mr. Obama's invite to Cuba -- where she would have gotten time to not only relay her frustrations to the president, but also learn the Cuban culture and glean winning ideas that could bode well for the Virgin Islands -- has only served to disempower her seemingly tireless efforts in Congress to draw attention to the territory.

The technology executives and congresspeople who had been scheduled to attend the panel, knowing the importance of a presidential invite, would by no means be insulted by Ms. Plaskett's request to postpone the meeting. Technology executives will be around for a long time; so too will congresspeople. But Mr. Obama leaves office next year, and any chance that Ms. Plaskett could have obtained to win the president's support for the islands, is more than likely gone.

"Renewed diplomatic and economic relations with Cuba present real challenges to the territory, specifically, in competition for U.S. tourism dollars and as a potential diversion of port and manufacturing opportunities in the Caribbean," Ms. Plaskett contended in a recently issued press release. "In my discussions with the Obama administration and fellow lawmakers, I have emphasized the need for the United States to prioritize the interests of its own island territories above the interest of diplomatic relations with Cuba."

True. But it's also Ms. Plaskett's job to make wise decisions that would earn her support in Congress and the White House.

As a territory with about 120,000 people, we are but a sidebar to American politicians; sad but true, as has been evident by the neglect of the territory -- whether to investigate the rampant accusations of corruption, or to help lift the islands out of economic quagmire -- over the years.

Politicians can be likened to what the Bible describes as *fishers of men*. They know how to become all things to all people, and can morph into various mindsets to win trust. In this case, Ms. Plaskett should have swallowed her pride, neglect for a moment the Virgin Islands' plight, and take the trip to Cuba with the president. Sit with him, talk to him, passionately transfer her heartfelt desires to see the territory move forward, and hopefully win some big favors from Mr. Obama before he leaves office.

She chose to attend a panel discussion instead; a costly mistake that could haunt her for the rest of her first term in office.

Written by: The Editorial Board.

Feature Image: President Obama and President Raúl Castro of Cuba on Monday morning in Havana. Credit Stephen Crowley/The New York Times.

