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## Veteran and Well-Known Businessman on St. Croix is Honored on Veterans Day

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**From left, Robert Leguillou, STX Admin. Sammuel Sanes, Sen. Novelle Francis, Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach, Angel Diaz, Jr., VA Dir. Patrick Farrell, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, and Comrade Azalea Macedon. By. ERNICE GILBERT / VI CONSORTIUM**

ST. CROIX — Veteran Angel E. Diaz Jr. paused for a moment Thursday during his speech accepting an honor bestowed upon him by the V.I. Office of Veterans Affairs as part of the Veterans Day commemoration on St. Croix. He was preceded by numerous laudations from speakers who highlighted Mr. Diaz's lifelong commitment to service as well as his success as a businessmen.

"I'm overwhelmed with gratitude in receiving this honor today," he stated in remarks at a podium erected adjacent to the La Reine Chicken Shack, which he co-owns. "As I stand here and receive this honor, I also thank all the veterans who unselfishly place their lives on the line for our freedom."

According to information provided in a program booklet, Mr. Diaz, 50, was born in Vieques, Puerto Rico. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and completed basic training on April 5, 1990. Mr. Diaz was an airborne infantryman and was stationed in Kitzigen, Germany. He participated in Operation Desert Shield, Operation Sandy Cocktail and the Gulf War, among other important missions during his four-year tour.

When he returned to St. Croix in 1994, he became a police officer where he served for 20 years. In 1998 he was assigned to the Drug Enforcement Agency/High Drug Intensity Task Force (DEA/HIDTA), which saw the veteran taking part in many federal and local investigations.

On Sept. 1, 2001, Mr. Diaz along with his father Angel E. Diaz Sr. and Alex and Robert Leguillou, purchased the former Junnies BBQ now known as the La Reine Chicken Shack. Today, the establishment remains one of the most successful restaurants in the Virgin Islands.

Among other accomplishments, Mr. Diaz was assigned to former Governor John P. de Jongh's executive security unit and was appointed district supervisor for the former governor's security detail. He retired from the V.I. Police Dept. on Dec. 31, 2014.

On Thursday, Mr. Diaz spoke of his business partner Mr. Leguillou, who he said came up with the idea to provide veterans with free meals every Veterans Day at the La Reine Chicken Shack. "I said — excuse my language — hell yeah, let's do it. For our veterans, anything because that's the least we could do for our veterans."

The tradition has continued unabated since it commenced several years ago, and the businessmen have no plans to stop.

Speaking during the ceremony were local leaders including Vice Senate President Novelle Francis, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach. They spoke of the importance of Veterans Day and the need to honor those who have served. Ms. Plaskett in particular spoke of her efforts in Congress to help better the lives of veterans.

"Veterans in the Virgin Islands we know do not get the level of services that they deserve. This has been a longstanding issue and I and others are continuing and committed to changing that," she said. "We recognize and understand that the struggles and needs of the veterans in our territory are many." Ms. Plaskett said she has co-sponsored legislation in Congress to establish an advisory committee within the Dept. of Veterans Affairs that will give veterans in the Insular Area (the U.S. territories) "one more way to put their concerns and needs front and center at the department." She said the legislation recently received attention in committee hearings and she continues to push for its passage.