

**REMARKS BY THE U.S. CONSUL GENERAL MARGARET HAWTHORNE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 240<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

July 4, 2016

As prepared for delivery

Good evening, bontardi, and a very warm welcome to Roosevelt House and Happy Fourth of July!

Her Excellency Lucille George-Wout, Governor-General of Curaçao

His Excellency Bernard Whiteman, Prime Minister of Curacao

His Excellency Marcalino Franco, President of Parliament

Honorable Ministers from Curacao, Aruba and St. Maarten

Honorable Members of Parliament

Fellow members of the Consular Corps

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for honoring us with your presence this evening to celebrate the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America. Our special thanks to those who travelled from the other islands to be here. And most importantly, thank you to our many sponsors for their generous support again this year to make this magnificent evening possible. You will see our sponsors' names listed on the Donor Wall in the foyer and the video we have running in the foyer as well.

It is truly an honor to represent my country as the new United States Consul General to Curacao, as well as to Aruba, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. Your presence with us this evening is a testament to the strength and depth of the friendship between the United States and the Dutch Caribbean. I arrived in Curacao about two and a half months ago and, in that brief period of time, I have experienced the warm hospitality for which your beautiful islands are – deservedly – so well known.

I'd like to begin by taking a moment to talk about our theme for the evening – Route 66 – the iconic highway that connected my hometown of Chicago, Illinois and passed through much of the central and western U.S. before ending in Santa Monica, California. Route 66 was established in 1926 and served as the major path for many who migrated west, searching for better work opportunities and a better life, especially during the devastating Dust Bowl of the 1930s. And with the mass migration west, Route 66's historic trail also supported the economies of the communities that were on it – bringing hope and prosperity to communities that were suffering during the Great Depression. Route 66 was

in fact the birth place of mom-and-pop businesses, restaurant and service stations – small businesses that are the backbone of national economies. It also saw the first drive-through restaurant in Springfield Missouri, as well as the very first McDonalds – in San Bernardino, California. So it comes as no surprise that Route 66 is also known as the Main Street of America. Tonight we've chosen to highlight four cities along Route 66, Chicago, St. Louis, Flagstaff and Los Angeles, with food typical of those areas. I hope you will enjoy trying them.

At the same time, we are also celebrating the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roosevelt House – our iconic building and residence that symbolizes the strong and steadfast friendship between Curacao and the United States. The Roosevelt House, which I now call home, was built after the devastating remains of World War II but brought promise of continued friendship between our countries which have enjoyed diplomatic ties since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I am delighted to report that on Friday we were notified that the Roosevelt House was selected to be placed on the Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Property. It is truly an honor to be added to this prestigious list and it means that my successors will enjoy living in this beautiful house for many years to come.

We chose this theme not just because we thought it would be fun and we liked the song, but because it represents ideals that both our countries share: Commitment to a better life for our people; support for diversity and individual freedom; and an adventurous and optimistic spirit. Just as people in the U.S. used Route 66 to follow their dreams and just as the people of the Dutch Caribbean after World War II worked hard to cement their freedoms, so the United States and the Dutch Caribbean continue today to work together to promote our common values and achieve a brighter future for our children. As my predecessors have done, I look forward to building upon the strong partnerships and look for even more opportunities to cooperate in areas of mutual interest.

First, together we continue to build partnerships to promote security and to stop trafficking in narcotics. I would like, in particular, to recognize the important contribution of the U.S. Forward Operating Location to this effort and to extend our deepest gratitude to both Curacao and Aruba for hosting the FOL for more than 15 years. The FOL, which is used to counter drug trafficking in the region – is an essential component of the global strategy to combat illicit narcotics. The men and women of the FOL are also known for their frequent volunteer work in local communities. We are pleased to welcome the new FOL Commander, Lt. Col. Jonathan McGowen, who has a distinguished career in the United States Air Force.

The narcotics trade impacts the safety and security of citizens throughout the region. And it is important to focus our efforts on dismantling the larger criminal networks that are using new routes and exploiting vulnerabilities in law enforcement to profit from illicit activity.

The FOL in Curacao plays a critical role in supporting that mission by conducting counter trafficking operations through the Joint Interagency Task Force-South, and it counts the Kingdom of the Netherlands as an international partner.

Second, we are building partnerships to assist the nearly three million American citizens who visit the Dutch Caribbean each year, and to issue visas for the thousands of students, businessman, professionals and tourist who travel to the U.S. every year. During my tenure as Consul General, I am committed to expanding visa services even more to the diverse group of other nationalities who call the Dutch Caribbean their home.

Third, we will work together to promote trade and investment between the United States and the Dutch Caribbean. I am particularly interested in focusing on energy security, and the development of different sources of renewable energy. The Dutch Caribbean islands were well represented at the Vice President's Energy Security Summit in Washington, DC in May. I am committed to working with your governments to expand on the goals of the Summit and learning more about what Curacao and Aruba are doing to secure their energy future as models for the entire Caribbean, and to be responsible caretakers of our environment. As you may have seen as you came in, we are working on a solar energy and energy efficiency project and we hope to become the first U.S. Mission anywhere in the world, to go to net zero energy usage.

Finally, through cultural exchange programs and through collaboration in education and in scientific research, we are strengthening people-to-people ties between the United States and the Dutch Caribbean. I hope to build on the momentum of expanding higher education opportunities in the U.S. for students from Curacao and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. The number of students studying in the U.S. has increased by more than 300% since 2012. And these recent graduates are going to be returning to their homes shortly, armed with degrees, knowledge, and confidence needed to build their island's future.

We share a rich and ambitious agenda, and I can assure you that every member of the U.S. Mission to the Dutch Caribbean is honored to play a role in advancing that agenda. As I begin to settle into my role as Consul General, I look forward to meeting and working with all of you very soon in the near future. I also look forward to meeting with you to learn more about your work and how we further deepen our partnerships between the countries and islands of the Dutch Caribbean and the U.S.

Before closing, I would like to thank my incredible colleagues in the Consulate for working so hard to plan this lovely evening.

Excellency's, ladies and gentlemen, valued friends, danki un biaha mas pa a bini awe nochi; thank you again for joining us this evening to celebrate the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America.