

Ambassador James Zumwalt Remarks
July 4th National Day Reception
May 26, 2016

(As prepared)

Honorable Minister of Armed Forces, Representative of the Government of Senegal,
Honorable Members of the Government of Senegal
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Dear Guests, Friends and Fellow Citizens
Ladies and Gentleman

Assalam Aleikoum!

Welcome and thank you for attending our Independence Day celebration!

Greetings. I sincerely thank you for celebrating Independence Day with us this evening.

Before I switch to French, I would like to take a moment to greet our English speaking guests.

Ann, and I are delighted to host you this evening as we celebrate our Independence Day. While our official Independence Day will not occur until the Fourth of July, we wanted to ensure that our friends who will soon begin celebrating Ramadan would be able join us.

This will be my second Independence Day reception in Senegal. Over the past year I have been truly charmed by the people of Senegal, from whom I have learned much about generosity and the importance of friends and family. The relationship between our countries is founded on deep mutual respect and the firm conviction that our two nations share fundamental core interests.

Last year at this event, I was only just beginning to fully understand the term Taranga and Senegal's tradition of welcoming strangers. Since then, I've had the good fortune to travel to the four corners of Senegal. From Richard Toll, where we inaugurated the RN2 Highway last summer as part of our \$540 million investment in Senegal's infrastructure, to Kedougou, where I saw first-hand the beautiful and lush countryside on a hike to Dindefello Falls from Camara Kunda in the Casamance, where new roads and markets have revitalized isolated villages after years of conflict, to Koalack, where I spoke to farmers who appreciate U.S. development assistance that allows them to raise yields and improve varieties of corn and millet.

On every visit in Senegal, the people welcomed me with open arms and the hospitality for which Senegal is famous.

Independence Day is a time for Americans to celebrate the birth of our nation and to recall the pride in taking our place among the other sovereign nations of the world. Senegal experienced the same pride of independence in 1960, leading a wave of newly-independent

nations across Africa. Yet as Africans celebrated their freedom, African-Americans in the 1960s struggled to claim the freedoms promised to them in our Declaration of Independence.

That struggle, the Civil Rights movement, found a musical voice. As you saw in our introduction video, Motown is the theme for tonight's event and for good reason. Motown created the soul and pop classics that became the anthems of 1960's America. At the height of the civil rights movement, Motown was a black-owned, black-centered business that introduced a completely new type of music to Americans of all races.

Earlier generations of American musicians were inspired by the rhythms of Africa. In our video, we learned from Senegalese musicians and artists that many drew inspiration from Motown. For African-Americans, it was an opportunity to showcase a new music, all their own. As it blended into American pop culture, Motown music also spread across the globe, carrying with it the messages of the American civil rights movement and the aspiration of equal opportunity for all.

But Motown was also a business, developed by an African-American entrepreneur named, Berry Gordy, Jr. He saw an untapped market and filled it. We honor this entrepreneurial spirit today and hope that young entrepreneurs across Senegal will continue to find inspiration in the grit and determination that built the Motown record label.

In the last year and a half, I have met many young Senegalese entrepreneurs. These men and women are passionate about creating new businesses that create new jobs and bring economic growth to Senegal. I have met the young Senegalese leaders who went to the United States on President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative. I have seen first-hand the brilliant ideas and energy they bring, not only to business, but to devising innovative solutions to their communities' challenges.

Before I offer a toast, I'd like to say a few words about our partnership with Senegal and its leadership role in the region. As an important regional leader, Senegal has made invaluable contributions to resolving conflicts and maintaining stability in West Africa, the Sahel region and elsewhere.

Senegal, with a population of less than 15 million, is the seventh largest contributor of military and police forces to UN peacekeeping operations. We salute Senegal's peacekeeping efforts in Mali, the Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, and Guinea-Bissau.

Last fall, Senegal was elected to the United Nations Security Council. The United States will work closely with Senegal on the UN Security Council to reduce armed conflict around the world.

As chairman of Economic Community of West African States, President Macky Sall has played a key role in brokering difficult regional tensions.

In February, Senegal co-hosted the month-long Flintlock military exercise with 28 partner nations, many of them African. This exercise improved partner nations' capability to counter

terrorist threats and strengthened our regional partnerships. And earlier this month, we signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement which will facilitate a closer relationship between our two militaries and provide the legal foundation for a broad range of joint defense-related activities.

The United States is committed to Senegal's success.

The United States, through USAID and other development agencies, spends approximately \$130 million each year in Senegal in close partnership with the Senegalese government and civil society to improve health care, strengthen food security, and improve educational outcomes.

Nearly 250 American Peace Corps volunteers work in isolated rural villages throughout Senegal to improve the lives of their host communities.

And through the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the United States government provided 540 million dollars over a five-year period to build on Senegal's investments in infrastructure, production capacity, and job creation. The recent decision that Senegal is eligible for a second compact shows our commitment to Senegal as a regional leader.

Senegal will remain an essential partner for the United States in West Africa. Our shared commitment to democratic values, forms the bedrock of our close partnership. I look forward to working to further strengthen our bond over the coming years.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for coming and welcome you all to celebrate the United States' 240th birthday! Thank you, merci. Jere jef. Be dewen ak jamm.

And I would like to make a toast with the Minister of Defense to celebrate the strong and enduring friendship between Senegal and the United States.

Thank you to all and enjoy the party