

Ambassador Lewis Lukens
U.S. Independence Day Reception

U.S. Embassy NEC – Dakar, Senegal
Tuesday 3rd June 2014

(As prepared)

Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, Representing the
Government of Senegal,

Honorable Members of the Government of Senegal,

Dear Colleagues and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Dear Guests, Friends and Fellow-citizens,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a few hours I will depart Senegal, ending my assignment here as US Ambassador. It has been a great honor and privilege to work with everyone in this room. I inherited a strong and dynamic relationship between our two great countries and our two great peoples, and I hope I have done my part to make that relationship even stronger.

I would like to recognize three senior members of my staff whose time here has overlapped with mine, and who are also leaving soon. Peace Corps Country Director Chris Hedrick, USAID Deputy Director Alfreda Brewer, and Public Affairs Officer Kristin Kane have all been trusted advisors and friends, not just to me but to many in this room. Please join me in thanking them for their service to the United States and to Senegal.

Please permit me to indulge in a short stroll down memory lane. When I arrived in Dakar three years ago, President Abdoulaye Wade was gearing up to run for a constitutionally questionable third term in office. This embassy, working with other international partners, supported important efforts by civil society, efforts that ultimately allowed free and transparent elections, and a peaceful transfer of power, to take place.

President Macky Sall's inauguration was followed closely by the visit of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, during which she highlighted the strong partnership between the United States

and Africa. In the spring of 2013 we moved into this beautiful, modern, environmentally friendly building, one that will stand for decades as the symbol of the strong friendship between our countries. Just a few weeks after we cut the ribbon here, I joined President Sall for meetings in the White House with President Obama. They obviously got along quite well – because just three months later President Obama came here with his family for a two day visit that underscored the importance of Senegal as a beacon of democracy and good governance on this continent.

I have traveled all over this beautiful country, to every region from the Casamance to Kedegou to Matham and St. Louis and just about everywhere in between. Everywhere I go, people talk about the positive effect the United States has had on their lives, whether through military or educational exchanges, or USAID development projects, or MCC's infrastructure improvements, or through interaction with one of the 250 Peace Corps volunteers we have in country. It has been an honor to lead and oversee this relationship for the past three years. The US is committed to the prosperous future of Senegal, and I thank all of our partners, all of you here tonight, for working so closely with us to help this country realize its potential.

In closing, let me just say Nio far, jere jefe, merci.