



**Defense Cooperation Agreement Signing
Remarks for Ambassador Zumwalt**

May 2, 2016

(As prepared)

The relationship between the Republic of Senegal and the United States has become stronger and deeper in every dimension over the decades. Our governments work closely together to create more economic opportunity for our citizens, to protect our countries against common threats, and to support each other in the pursuit of shared ideals.

The relationship between our countries is founded on deep mutual respect and the firm conviction that the core interests of our two nations are intertwined. Indeed, these two ideas—mutual respect and shared interests—form the foundation of the strong partnership between us.

Let me give an example. In 2014 as West Africa faced an unprecedented outbreak of the Ebola virus, people in both Senegal and the United States were worried. In our interconnected world, disease can travel as fast as a passenger on an airplane. This scourge knew no national borders. President Obama understood the United States had to work together with West African nations affected by Ebola. But we could not do this alone. As we prepared to mobilize our emergency response for combatting Ebola, we asked the Government of Senegal for permission to set up a logistics hub at the Dakar Airport. Senegal agreed to support our effort to meet a common challenge. Neither the United States nor Senegal alone could have contained this shared threat. We needed each other.

We are here today to sign an agreement on defense cooperation. So why am I talking about Ebola? It is because during the Ebola crisis both governments recognized that as our security relationship has grown, we needed a stronger legal framework to work together in response to unexpected challenges. The next shared concern might take the form of another disease outbreak, a natural disaster calling for a humanitarian response, or, a terrorist threat. Our Ebola response effort showed us that sometimes our partnership must move quickly. So agreeing in advance on the roles and responsibilities for U.S. military forces invited into Senegal makes good sense.

Let me say a few words about the agreement itself. The Defense Cooperation Agreement's purpose is to define a set of rules for how the U.S. military cooperates with Senegal's military and the conditions for access and use of facilities when our military is invited to Senegal.

Beyond its practical value, our new defense cooperation agreement is also a milestone in a relationship that has, as I said at the outset, become stronger and deeper.

With this agreement, the United States military and the Senegalese military can plan better together, accomplish more with joint training, and better prepare to respond in concert to risks to our shared interests. As we look back at the past year, U.S. and Senegalese troops have participated in numerous military exercises, most recently Flintlock and Obangame/Saharan Express, that directly increase our capacity to respond to these risks. The agreement that we sign today reflects this high level of cooperation and sets the stage for increased security cooperation over the coming years.