



**Chargé d’Affaires Robert Yamate
Remarks on the Occasion of the
Celebration of the 236th Anniversary of
The Independence of the United States of America**

**Dakar, Senegal
July 4, 2012**

Welcome to the celebration of the 236th anniversary of the Independence of the United States of America.

As we celebrate the Fourth of July, we celebrate the triumph of democracy. Our founding fathers established a system of governance that few expected to survive. In 1776, democracy was an experiment, a leap of faith. Few believed that political and social equality – government by the people – was a viable way to run a country.

During the civil war, it briefly seemed to the leaders of our nation that the grand experiment of democracy had come to an end. But President Lincoln had faith. He knew that despite the battles our young men had endured, the nation and its people would heal. And as he predicted in his famous speech at Gettysburg, when the Civil War ended, the United States experienced a new birth of freedom, and we are its proud heirs.

And as we celebrate democracy on this Fourth of July, our Senegalese friends have their own democratic triumph to celebrate with us.

On March 25th, after months of uncertainty and concern, the Senegalese people went to the polls and made their voices heard – proudly and peacefully voting in a new government.

The path was difficult – things that are hard and complicated are rarely easy. But it was a great democratic victory, a symbol for all nations to emulate, and we applaud the people of Senegal for their continued democratic tradition!

We are here today to celebrate America’s Birthday. I’d like to welcome all the Americans – Yankees, Southerners, Midwesterners, Californians... who are able to join us tonight. And a special welcome to our men and women in uniform. Our officers and sailors from the USS Simpson, the U.S. Cadet Command, and members of the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines stationed at the United States Embassy. Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

Allow me to make a similar acknowledgement to the members of the Senegalese military, gendarmes, and police force, who are with us tonight, for their continued efforts to maintain peace and security in the region and throughout the world.

America is a country of many symbols. We have a saying: “As American as apple pie.” Baseball is called “America’s pastime.” The Statue of Liberty is a sign of welcome to immigrants from around the world.

But the most enduring symbol of America is our flag – the Red, White, and Blue.

When our flag was adopted in 1777, the colors weren’t symbols. They were simply colors. It was only later, when they were integrated as part of the Great Seal of the United States, that they were given the meanings we know now. White for purity and innocence; red for hardiness and valor; and blue for vigilance, perseverance, and justice. For many of us, the colors red, white, and blue simply symbolize “freedom.”

As President Obama proclaimed on Flag Day 2012, “For over 200 years, our flag has proudly represented our Nation and our ideals at home and abroad.

It has billowed above monuments and memorials, flown beside the halls of government, stood watch over our oldest institutions, and graced our homes and storefronts. Generations of service members have raised our country's colors over military bases and at sea, and generations of Americans have lowered them to mourn those we have lost. Though our flag has changed to reflect the growth of our Republic, it will forever remain an emblem of the ideals that inspired our great Nation: liberty, democracy, and the enduring freedom to make of our lives what we will.”

And so we celebrate today. We celebrate with our partner and ally, the Republic of Senegal. We celebrate our democracies, freedom, and the blessings of liberty and enduring friendship that are shared by our two great nations, Senegal and the United States of America.

Thank you, and Happy Birthday America!