

**Ambassador Zumwalt Remarks
For July 4th National Day Reception
June 11, 2015**

(As prepared)

Honorable Representative of the Government of Senegal, Armed Forces Minister Augustin Tine

Honorable Members of the Government of Senegal

Dear Colleagues and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Dear Guests, Friends and Fellow Citizens

Ladies and Gentleman

Assalam Aleikoum! Ma ngui lène di gereum ci sène tééway fii ci Ambassade Etats-Unis

(Translation): Greetings. I sincerely thank you for attending this event at the Embassy of the United States.

Before I switch to French, I would like to take a moment to greet our non-French speaking guests. My wife, Ann, and I are very happy and honored to be here today with you, all our very special guests. It is a wonderful honor to have you all with us for my first celebration of Independence Day in Dakar.

This is our first opportunity to celebrate our national day here in Dakar. Since our arrival in Senegal, Ann and I have been so moved by the warm welcome from many new Senegalese friends and by the wonderful culture of Teranga in this beautiful country. Today we are delighted to host you all to our Embassy to experience some American hospitality.

Americans often refer to this Independence Day holiday as the 4th of July, to mark the anniversary of when the founders of our Republic adopted the Declaration of Independence in 1776. However, we have chosen to gather in advance of that date in respect of the many of you who will soon be fasting in honor of Ramadan.

As you have noticed, we have chosen a special theme, the glamour of 1960's Hollywood, for this year's party. As someone who grew up not far from Hollywood, I understand the attraction of its iconic images.

We have chosen a 1960's theme because that era brought historic moments in our relationship with the Republic of Senegal.

In September 1960 the United States recognized and established diplomatic relations with a newly independent Senegal.

The United States was one of the first nations to send an Ambassador, Henry Villard, to reside in Dakar.

In April 1961, Vice President Lyndon Johnson came to Dakar to join the celebration of the first anniversary of Senegalese independence.

In November 1961, President John F. Kennedy invited President Leopold Senghor to Washington where they met in the White House.

In 1963 the first American Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Senegal.

Since then over 3,000 Americans have worked side-by-side with Senegalese partners to promote good health, improve agriculture and provide educational opportunities.

The 1960s also saw a strengthening of our cultural ties.

In 1966 the State Department sent the greatest names in African-American culture - Duke Ellington, Alvin Ailey and Langston Hughes - to Senegal for the "Festival Mondial des Arts Negres".

Today, fifty years later, the relationship between the Republic of Senegal and the United States remains strong, robust, and dynamic.

Bilateral Relations with Senegal

Senegal and the United States are natural partners because we share common values and common interests. We are two diverse societies with strong democratic traditions rooted in ethnic and religious tolerance. These traditions serve as a bulwark against extremism.

We share an interest in promoting regional security and a willingness to contribute to international efforts to make or preserve the peace. The United States and Senegal share the dream of promoting economic prosperity at home and around the world in order to build a better and more prosperous future for our children.

Indeed the United States has a great deal of respect for Senegal's leadership role in West Africa. We appreciate Senegal's contributions to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations.

We rely upon a strong partnership with Senegal as, together, we continue to battle against the threat of Ebola in the region.

In my first five months in Senegal, I have been privileged to meet with partners and new friends in the Senegalese government.

I have also been honored to meet the leaders of the Mouride and Tidiane brotherhoods and the Archbishop of the Catholic church. I look forward to meeting Senegal's other religious leaders.

I have been incredibly impressed by the remarkable individuals in Senegal's civil society, including social activists, farmers and entrepreneurs who contribute to the vibrancy of this country's democracy and its economy.

Last, I have been delighted by the many young people I have met. Seeing their passion and patriotism, I am optimistic about Senegal's future.

The United States and Senegal have a rich, broad partnership. Let me mention a few highlights of my brief tenure in Senegal:

Inaugurating the Millennium Challenge Corporation-funded bridge in Kolda.

The bridge is one part of \$540 million in MCC projects being completed this year, in line with the goals of Plan Senegal Emergent.

Visiting the Casamance region.

I met some remarkable men and women who are determined to bring peace and economic development to the region.

I also saw how much the people of the Casamance appreciate U.S. help to build rural roads, strengthen the health care system and improve training and support farmers.

Participating in Senegal's vibrant musical culture at the Saint Louis Jazz festival.

Meeting some amazing farmers in the Senegal River valley.

They are taking advantage of USAID agricultural projects to dramatically increase rice yields and improve rice quality.

Meeting American Peace Corps volunteers in Kolda, Louga, and Richard Toll.

I have learned about their work with Senegalese farmers and health care providers to aid their local communities.

Participating in the African Land Forces Summit in Dakar.

Army leaders, from countries spanning the African continent, came to discuss the common goal of achieving peace, security, and economic prosperity in our societies.

Hosting a lunch for 15 dynamic young Senegalese who will travel to the United States this summer.

Together with 500 other young Africans, they will learn about public management, entrepreneurship and civil society as participants in President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative.

And interacting with so many articulate and forceful Senegalese women, both young and old.

From vegetable farmers in the Senegal River valley, to peace activists in Ziguinchor, to entrepreneurs in Dakar, these women are building strong communities, peaceful societies and prosperous communities.

I look forward to seeing and experiencing much more in the year to come.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for coming and welcome you all to celebrate the United States 239th year of independence. Thank you, merci.

Jere jef. Be dewen ak jamm.)

(Translation) Thank you to all. I hope to see you next year.