

STATEMENT OF LEWIS LUKENS
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL AND TO
THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
JUNE 7, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today. I wish to thank President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the trust and confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce my family. My wife Lucy, and our daughters Lallie and Leeza, have been my anchor through many moves, and have been exceptional representatives of the United States overseas. And my parents Alan and Susan Lukens are here. My father served this country for four years in the Army during World War II, and for 36 years as a diplomat, mostly in Africa. In fact, he appeared before this sub-committee twenty-five years ago as nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of Congo, now known as Congo-Brazzaville.

For the past 22 years I have dedicated my career to serving the United States through various positions at the White House and State Department. If confirmed, it would be a great honor and privilege to serve our country in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

The United States and Senegal share a strong bilateral relationship. As a critical partner in Francophone Africa, Senegal is a key ally in the fight against terrorism and narcotics, and has been an important player on regional and international issues.

Senegal is one of a few African countries to have never experienced a coup, and prides itself as a religiously tolerant nation. However, Senegal does face economic, governance, and press freedom challenges that threaten its democratic and development future. Senegal suffers from a crippling energy crisis that causes frequent power outages and has weakened economic growth. Senegal would like to emerge as a major regional economic hub, and if confirmed, I will work with the government to encourage enactment of economic reforms necessary to attract investment and expand access to markets.

Senegal will hold presidential and legislative elections in February 2012. These elections are important to the country's democratic future. Concerns about democratic backsliding and corruption have tarnished Senegal's longstanding democratic reputation. If confirmed, I will work with President Wade and the Government of Senegal in their efforts to prepare for transparent, fair, and credible elections.

Senegal is a recipient of many foreign assistance programs, most notably a \$540 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact. I understand that the United States Government must be accountable to American taxpayers and, especially in this difficult economic climate, every dollar must be effectively used. If confirmed, I will work closely with our strong partners in Senegalese civil and religious society and with the government to ensure that Senegal continues to improve on all of its indicators.

The small, former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau is one of the world's poorest countries, with an economy based on cashew production. Its poverty, its geography, and its historic instability have contributed to a flourishing narcotics trade that has compromised many elements of the military and civilian leadership.

However, U.S. law enforcement agencies have identified, and currently are working closely with credible Bissau-Guinean government counterparts. Through a memorandum signed with Portugal, we will have a U.S. diplomat placed in the Portuguese Embassy in Guinea-Bissau. This will help increase our knowledge of the narcotics trafficking situation and encourage the host government to raise its profile on this important issue. U.S. goals are to promote sustainable democratic political development, combat narcotics trafficking, and lay the foundations for economic growth. We are currently running successful, cost-effective programs that feed almost fifty percent of the country's school-aged children, and that destroy unexploded ordnance and eliminate landmines laid since Bissau's war for independence. To its credit, Guinea-Bissau recently has held free and fair elections, is working to stabilize its economy, and qualified for debt relief by implementing fiscally sound policies.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your continuing interest in the United States' relations with Africa. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your Committee and other members of Congress in representing the interests of the American people in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

I would be happy to answer your questions.