

Christening of the "Tempelhof Ambassador"

Tempelhof Airport

July 1, 2002

Ambassador Coats

Dr Gysi,

Herr Stillman,

Herr Schlegel,

Herr Herberg,

Ich freue mich, heute Morgen hier zu sein.

Tempelhof is a landmark in the landscape of the German-American partnership.

Tempelhof was the center of Berlin Airlift operations during the Berlin Blockade of 1948-1949. The Berlin Blockade was one of this century's defining events and the postwar friendship between Germany and the U.S. was born during the Airlift. As the Iron Curtain descended around a free Berlin, the last battleground of a World War turned into the first battleground of the Cold War. The Airlift pilots turned one of freedom's darkest days into one of its brightest triumphs.

Since those days, there have been a series of triumphs in the German-American friendship. The Cold War has been brought to a definitive end but Germany and the United States and the transatlantic partnership now are taking the lead in facing the new 21st century challenges that face us.

Developing and sustaining economic growth -- developing and sustaining competitive but fair trade relationships -- is one of the keys to solving those challenges.

The aircraft we inaugurate today is the first Gulfstream IV SP in Germany and the first of its type to be commissioned for commercial use in the European Union. And so, despite all we hear about the problems in transatlantic trade, this plane is a good symbol of the health of that relationship.

As we send this aircraft off on its inaugural flight, we pay tribute to the depth and the importance of the German-American friendship.

On behalf of the Embassy and of my predecessors who have served in Germany as the U.S. Ambassador, let me convey my pride and appreciation for the name that you have chosen -- the "Tempelhof Ambassador." I think, in fact, we can all share in that pride as we prepare to christen this airplane.

Ship christening ceremonies, and I assume it is the same for airplane christening ceremonies, are a time honored tradition, whose origin can be traced back as early as when ships first put to sea. Tradition holds that the spirit of the sponsor enters the ship at christening and remains forever. The sponsor and the spirit of this aircraft is German-American friendship. May it go on forever.