

July 4 Celebration
Dresden, July 2, 2002
Ambassador Coats

Minister-President Prof. Dr. Milbradt,
Lord Mayor Roßberg,
Liebe Gäste,

heute feiern wir den Geburtstag Amerikas.

I would like to join our Consul General Tim Savage in thanking our many sponsors for their support in helping us to mark this important day on our calendar and make this celebration so special. Ten years ago, almost to the day, the U.S. officially re-opened the American Consulate in Leipzig -- continuing a long tradition of official U.S. engagement in this part of Germany, going back to 1826. We attach great importance to re-establishing old connections and developing new economic, cultural and people-to-people ties to the New Federal States.

Born on July 4, two hundred and twenty-six years ago, the birth of the United States can be fixed in a moment - the moment when the first Founding Father signed the Declaration of Independence.

The United States of America was the first nation to be founded on a dream and an ideal. That is what we celebrate every year on the 4th of July. Historically, no other nation has forged its core identity so directly and explicitly on the basis of universal human values. And the most eloquent expression of those values is in the Declaration of Independence.

Just like today, the founding pioneers with all their cultural diversities discovered that more united them, than divided them. And the overwhelming force that united America was liberty.

For the founding fathers, America was a place where the Old World order could be remade, but not entirely forgotten.

America's greatest power -- more than our vast resources, more than the overwhelming beauty of our country, more than our great ethnic and cultural melting pot - is freedom. People from everywhere in the world come to our country with what a statue in New York's harbor calls a yearning to breathe free. And so, as we gather to celebrate America's birthday, we also celebrate that new birth of freedom. And a nation where the right of the people to govern themselves is realized, where religion is a matter of personal conscience, where dreams are large. But as we learned last September, there are those whose dreams are small, whose world is circumscribed by bigotry and persecution, resentment and oppression, hatred and death.

September 11 changed the world in ways we can't yet understand, but some things remain constant even in the context of radical change. Freedom is one of those constants. Indeed, the freedom we celebrate today goes beyond a guarantee on a piece of time-yellowed paper or a vision of individual freedom that allows Americans to take risks to get ahead in life. As President Bush said in his speech to the Bundestag, to create a safer world, we have to create a better world. That means placing renewed importance on the values and ideals we celebrate today -- as defined in our Declaration of Independence -- that all men are created equal, and endowed by their creator, with the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The community of caring and compassion that stretched across America and around the world on

September 11 was also built on those values and ideals. The outpouring of support - and that of people of all walks of life across Germany - was an expression of friendship and spontaneous emotion that Marsha and I will never forget.

(If available. I know President Bush shares these sentiments. I would like to quote to you from his Independence Day statement to the American people:...)

In closing, I would like to use this opportunity to thank my colleagues at the Embassy at the Consulate General in Leipzig for their unwavering support and enormous initiative in the 10 years since the Consulate was reopened and for shouldering the many new challenges that have arisen in the last 10 months.

(CG Savage does not know about the award - his staff would like it to be a surprise.) I would like to especially commend Consul General Tim Savage for his extraordinary vision, inspiration, and leadership of the Consulate General Leipzig and our combined Mission Germany initiative to build a stronger relationship with the new states of a united Germany. Tim will be leaving us shortly but his work has made a real difference. Tim, please come up here. We would like to present you with this certificate of Superior Honor. Your tireless and creative efforts have forged greater understanding and good will between the people and leaders of this region and the United States. We will all miss you.

Freunde, wir danken Ihnen.