

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Embassy of the United States of America,  
Banjul, The Gambia  
Thursday, February 20, 2003**

**U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Assistance Project**

The Embassy of the United States in Banjul, The Gambia, is pleased to announce the laying of the cornerstone of a new clinic at Fajara Barracks which will provide improved medical services to both the military and the local civilian population. This project is funded by the U.S. government.

Following the democratic elections of late 2001 and early 2002 and the lifting of sanctions in March 2002, the U.S. Government has expanded its cooperation with the government and people of the Republic of The Gambia in a variety of areas.

This includes military assistance, such as officer training under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the provision of certain non-lethal equipment, and the implementation of humanitarian assistance projects.

The Fajara Barracks clinic project falls under the U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Assistance Program, which sponsors projects that benefit both military and civilian populations.

**Dept. of Defense Humanitarian Assistance Project  
Cornerstone Ceremony at Fajara Barracks**

**Thursday, February 20**

**Ambassador's Remarks**

It gives me great pleasure to speak at today's event, which marks the initiation of the first U.S. Department of Defense humanitarian assistance project in The Gambia since 1994.

Less than one year ago, following the elections in late 2001 and early 2002, the U.S. Government determined that a democratically elected government had assumed office in The Gambia and thus lifted the sanctions imposed since 1994. This opened the door to increased cooperation between the United States and The Gambia on a normal legal basis.

We have already witnessed this re-engagement in other areas, such as the "U.S.-Gambian Business Forum" held in September 2002 with funding from USAID.

Military-to-military engagement between the United States and The Gambia resumed immediately upon the lifting of sanctions.

For example, Major General Rasmussen from the United States European Command came to The Gambia in February 2002. In a meeting hosted by Vice President Njie-Saidy, General Rasmussen discussed opportunities for military and security assistance with Gambian military, law enforcement,

and civilian officials. He also visited various sites around the greater Banjul area, including Fajara Barracks, to evaluate in person the requirements for various forms of military assistance.

In the ensuing months, U.S. military officials worked closely with the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff of Defense, the Permanent Secretary for Defense, and other Gambian officials to re-establish military-to-military cooperation.

In October 2002, the Deputy Chief of Staff and the Permanent Secretary for Defense attended an International Military Education and Training (IMET) program in the United States. Their attendance marked the first Gambian participation in IMET since 1994. Since then, two more Gambian officers have attended IMET courses and one more is scheduled to depart for training in July. We look forward to extending this and similar programs to other members of the military in the coming months and years, in order to continue the tradition of sending the best Gambian military officers to the U.S. for advanced training.

The U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Assistance Program funds projects -- such as this one -- that will benefit both the military and civilian populations. Major Lynch, who is chief of our regional Office of Defense Cooperation based in Dakar, built upon General Rasmussen's visit to identify today's project, the critically needed replacement of the clinic here at Fajara Barracks.

This project, the first phase of which amounts to about \$41,000, is not the first example of U.S. assistance to the military since the lifting of sanctions. It is, however, perhaps the one that will most quickly and directly benefit the Gambian people. We selected this project knowing that members of the surrounding community often turn to the military for medical care. Once completed, this new medical facility will be able to better address the needs numerous military and civilian patients each week.

Col. Jatta, Col. Badjie, PS for Defense Essa Khan, Major Lynch, and members of my staff at the embassy all deserve credit for our renewed military cooperation, in general, and the Fajara Barracks medical center project, in particular.

The laying of this cornerstone today is, quite literally, a concrete manifestation of the renewal and strengthening of the historic ties between the governments, armed forces, and people of the United States and The Gambia.

The regional U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation, based at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, worked closely with Gambian officials to identify a project that would accomplish that goal. The U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation recognized that the small existing clinic at the Fajara Barracks provides medical care to both military and civilian patients.

Construct, Ltd. has been awarded a \$41,000 contract to build the first phase of a larger medical facility to better serve both the military and local community.









