

Your Excellency Mr. Levitte, Mr. Larrieu, Mr. Guerney, Board members, San Diego French American Chamber of Commerce members and guests, it is with great pleasure that I am welcoming His Excellency Jean-David Levitte to the Westgate Hotel for our private luncheon. Your Excellency, thank you very much for taking some time from your extremely busy San Diego's visit to attend this function.

I would like also to thank Mr. Claude Girault, French elected official for alerting the Chamber about your upcoming visit. Mr. Larrieu and Mr. Bordes who worked with the Chamber's Board to make this event possible.

I think you will find in this room a good representation of the Francophile Business Community of San Diego. The companies represented here sometimes do business with France, but sometimes they don't. Whether they do or not everybody truly shares a deep appreciation for France.

To show our appreciation, I would like to call Mr. Guillaume Flamant, French born Director of Food and Beverages at the Westgate Hotel.

I would like now to call on Mr. Thierry Henot, from Lafayette Wines.

Finally I would like to give a wonderful book on behalf of the Board of the San Diego French American Chamber of Commerce and Denise Boulet-Dunn. Denise is member of the Chamber and an acclaimed writer. Her latest book is called : " El Mahdi Le Saadien Roi de Marrakech et Fès" which translates as "El Mahdi The Saadien, King of Marrakech and Fes".

It is the captivating and epic story of the King of Morocco in the 16 Century, depicting historical battles.

The economic ties between our two countries are strong.

Every single day, over \$1 billion in commercial transactions take place between France and the United States. French subsidiaries provide around half a million direct jobs in the United States, my personal guess is that it is probably closer to a million if you were to add indirect jobs.

In San Diego, we estimate the number of French citizens at about 6,000. According to 2000 Census data, the county is home to 43,000 people of French ancestry and 13,300 French Canadians.

The history of French Immigration in San Diego can be portrayed in several waves since the 1960's.

The first consisted of people who wanted to open French restaurants here.

The second was in the 1980s, when some French citizens came to the United States seeking a more favorable tax climate.

The third wave came during a recession in France in the 1990s, when an exodus of young people moved here to start businesses.

French businesses in San Diego are very diverse, with now a strong concentration in Biotechnology and Hi-tech. Some of those businesses are represented here, in particular Humetrix, GEN 2X and EnXco.

On top of course of the more traditional and historical hospitality and restaurant industries.

Ambassador Jean-David Levitte presented his credentials to President Bush on December 9, 2002. Ambassador Levitte has had a distinguished and outstanding career in the French foreign service, serving on the staff of two French Presidents and holding various senior positions in the French foreign service.

Born in 1946 in the south of France, Ambassador Levitte earned a law degree and is a graduate of Sciences-Po (the renowned Institute for Political Science in Paris) and of the National School of Oriental Languages, where he studied Chinese and Indonesian.

Having successfully passed the Foreign Service exam in 1970, he was first posted in Hong Kong and Beijing in the early 1970's.

A few months after his election in 1974, President Valery Giscard d'Estaing asked him to work on his staff at the Elysee Palace, where he stayed from 1975 to 1981.

Mr. Levitte was then assigned to his first position in the United States as Second Counselor at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York.

Upon returning to Paris, Mr. Levitte was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary in the African Bureau. He was then assigned as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister, a position he held from 1986 to 1988.

In 1988, he was designated to his first position as Ambassador and served as the French Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva from 1988 to 1990.

Returning to Paris in 1990, he held senior positions in the French Foreign Ministry, first as Assistant Secretary for Asia and then as Undersecretary for Cultural and Scientific Cooperation.

After the presidential elections in 1995, President Chirac asked Ambassador Levitte to be his Senior Diplomatic Adviser. He served in that position from 1995 to 2000.

President Chirac appointed him as French Permanent Representative to the United Nations in 2000, his most recent position before the present one. In New York, Ambassador Levitte successfully handled several international negotiations, including resolution 1441 on Iraq.

Ambassador Levitte is married to Marie-Cécile Jonas and has two daughters.

Pretty impressive background.

I would like to showcase two interviews that Ambassador Levitte gave to PBS which I believe truly represents who he truly is.

The first one was on February 7, 2003, an Interview from Jim Lehrer on Iraq. It must have been among Ambassador's Levitte first

interviews since presenting his credentials to President Bush on December 9, 2002. In this interview, Mr. Levitte displayed incredible insight as he said, responding to a question about the then potential war against Iraq:

“First Iraq is a divided country, very fragile, with a tradition of violence. So to maintain peace and to promote democracy in Iraq will be a huge task and it will take years”.

The events that unfolded since the beginning of the War in Iraq have certainly affirmed Ambassador’s Levitte predictions.

February 7, 2005 – Interview by Tucker Carlson PBS

“Once Colin Powell told me look, for more than 200 years France and the US have been in marriage counseling but the marriage is still strong and I think it's true. And we now have a much better mood, much more positive between the US and France between the US and Europe.”

I actually heard somewhere that France is the only European Nation that the United States has never been at war against. I have never

checked that fact, and maybe Ambassador Levitte will volunteer a confirmation in his coming speech.

Ambassador Levitte further said in the 2003 interview:

“When I look at the papers on both sides of the Atlantic, I wonder if the war is not between the United States and France, and really our friendship is a treasure that we must protect. We worked side by side with you during the days of your independence. You saved us two times during the two world wars and we will never forget that, and this treasure of our friendship must be defended, protected, preserved”

On behalf of the San Diego French American Chamber of Commerce, I am truly honored to welcome a man that embodies and typifies the best of the French-American Relations, a mutually beneficial relationship that has lasted over 200 years; a relationship based on mutual respect and shared ideals of freedom and western values.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to AMBASSADOR
LEVITTE