

**Address by**

**Consul General Rolf Schütte**

**Day of German Unity, German Residence,**

**San Francisco, October 3, 2007**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Liebe Gäste und Freunde,**

**My partner and I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you.  
Let me first say a few words in German:**

**Liebe Landsleute,**

**heute jährt sich zum 17. Mal der Tag, an dem wir die Wiedervereinigung unseres Landes feiern. Wir haben gerade die deutsche Nationalhymne gehört, die von Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit spricht. Diese Ziele wurden 1990 erreicht, als nach Jahrzehnten der Teilung unseres Landes schon niemand mehr daran glauben mochte. An dieses Ereignis, an dieses Glück erinnern wir uns heute bei Feiern in Deutschland und in Botschaften und Generalkonsulaten überall auf der Welt. Zugleich aber sind der 3. Oktober und besonders auch der 6. Oktober als "German-American Day" auch die Anlässe, an denen die Deutsch-Amerikaner mit Stolz auf das blicken können, was sie zum Gedeihen dieses Landes, der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, beigetragen haben und noch immer beitragen. Bei der Flaggenzeremonie heute Morgen im Rathaus von San Francisco haben wir uns gemeinsam an das reiche deutsch-amerikanische Erbe auch in dieser Stadt erinnert.**

**Diese beiden Anlässe wollen wir heute gemeinsam feiern.**

**Doch lassen Sie mich jetzt auf Englisch fortfahren, da nicht alle unsere Gäste Deutsch sprechen.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I just welcomed the members of the German American community in German. For many of them this is still their everyday language. In the United States, 42 million Americans, almost 15 % of the entire population, claim German ancestry. Thus, German Americans are the largest ethnic group in this country. Even here in San Francisco, far away from Europe, people of German ancestry make up almost 8 % of the population and thus constitute the third largest group - after the Chinese and the Irish. In addition to these Americans of German origin there are tens of thousands of German citizens living and working in the Bay Area.**

**For all of them, for all of us the Day of German Unity on October 3 is of greatest importance, as important as July 4 is for Americans. This is a major holiday in Germany when we celebrate – this year for the 17<sup>th</sup> time - the unification of our once divided country into the united Germany that exists today. This is also the day when we remember that after the fall of the Berlin Wall it was the United States that played a vital role on the path to German unity. Without the decisive U.S. support displayed over decades, German unity might have remained merely a dream.**

**But German-American friendship is not only a thing of the past. A few weeks ago, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier visited California. The mere fact that he chose California as the only state and San Francisco as the only big city to visit during this trip underlines the importance that Germany attaches to fostering its ties with this part of your country. In a speech here in San Francisco Minister Steinmeier underlined that a Transatlantic agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be different from the past. But he explained that this will not diminish the importance of the relationship. Steinmeier said: “In the coming decades, Europe and the United States will be more dependent on each other than ever before in this age of globalization. The global era can only gain a free, just and human profile if we – all those who uphold the ideals and values of the Enlightenment – join forces.” In particular, energy, climate change and security are challenges we can deal with successfully only if we do it jointly.**

**Thus, there is ample reason to celebrate.**

**But this year, we do not only want to celebrate the Day of German Unity and the continuing German-American friendship. We do not only want to enjoy German beer, wine and water, sausages, Black Forest ham and cake.**

**We have decided to share our joy with a group in this city that is rightly called “local heroes”. We want to honor not one special person, but a whole group: the San Francisco Firefighters and their colleagues from other Bay Area fire departments.**

**You may wonder why we developed this unusual idea to combine the diplomatic event of a national day celebration with such an honoring.**

**Well, think about it! Don’t you agree that diplomats and firefighters have a lot in common? Both try to prevent the worst from happening. Both try to extinguish fires before they get out of control. The ones deal with political fires, the others with real flames. Both need good training for such action. Both prefer preventive measures to nighttime emergency calls.**

**This alone would be sufficient to conceive of the idea of celebrating together.**

**But there is more to it: My colleagues and I at the German Consulate General as well as our partners and families and our numerous guests feel that we are part of this wonderful city, of this colorful and diverse community. And by honoring the firefighters we would like to express our gratitude to those who - in their tradition of dedication, service excellence, courage and pride - protect the people in this wonderful City by the Bay. They also protect us, the members of the consular community.**

**Thus, let me say thank you on behalf of all of us here tonight to the San Francisco Firefighters for all they do to make all of us sleep quietly at night and work in safety during the day.**

**Of course, to organize such an event is a very costly affair. And as the Consulate did not want to raise its fees for passports and visas, we are very grateful to DraegerSafety for its sponsorship for this event. As the experts among you know Draeger stands for German high tech and excellence in the fields of breathing and protection equipment, gas detection and analysis systems – all very important for fire departments and firefighters.**

**But not only the cooperation of DraegerSafety was indispensable for making this event possible. Of equal importance was the close cooperation with Joanne Hayes-White, the Fire Chief, and her colleagues from the Fire Department, especially Mindy Talmadge. Thank you very much. A big thankyou also to the San Francisco Fire Department Historical Society that has put together the wonderful exhibition on the history of the Department which you can see downstairs.**

**But now let me conclude by asking Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White and Chief of Protocol Charlotte Mailliard Shultz to address our guests. I have been told that Mayor Gavin Newsom was held up at City Hall. Thus, we would like to proceed with our program now.**

**Thank you for your attention!**