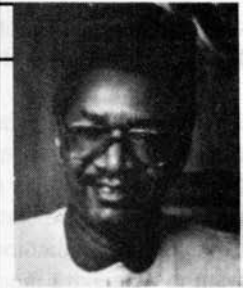


Senegal Ambassador M. Falilou Kane



DC-7 spraying against locusts a great 'success story'

The Republic of Senegal's ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Falilou Kane, was interviewed Sept. 25 by Marjorie Mazel Hecht about the successful large-plane pesticide spraying that took place in Senegal in early September. After months of inaction by international relief agencies and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the U.S. government finally made some assistance available to Senegal, although other affected countries suffered heavy damage. The ambassador heads a mission of 15.

Q: Your country is the only one in Africa to have a successful eradication effort against the grasshoppers and locusts, because of the large-scale aerial spraying by the U.S. DC-7s.

Kane: Yes, the large-scale spraying has been effective at this time, thanks to the United States government assistance and that of other countries, and of course what our government decided to put in. We decided to pay more than \$2 million to buy the pesticide product. We had asked some European countries to do it; they were hesitating, and so our government decided to buy the right product for the job, malathion.

Q: What is the situation now?

Kane: I just talked this morning with the Minister of Rural Development who told me that the first phase is accomplished. We hope that in that area everything has come back to normal. We had as many as 350 grasshoppers per square meter, and as you know, with only 8 per square meter, they eat as much as 60% of the vegetation. So it means that if we had not done anything, this could be disastrous for the people in this region, for the cattle, and for the environment. So for us, it is really a great success.

Q: How much of the area that was sprayed was cropland and how much grassland?

Kane: It was around 350,000 hectares altogether, mainly in an area where we have crops and grassland—in the northeastern region of Senegal, in Matam, Bakel, Podor, and Luga.

Q: What are the predominant crops in the northeastern part of Senegal?

Kane: It is millet and sorghum. We have rice in the vicinity of the River Senegal, cowpeas, and sugar not far from Daganah and Podor. We also have a lot of cattle. We have the most important part of our cattle grazing areas there.

Q: Are the cattle used for milk and meat?

Kane: Milk and meat, yes.

Q: The thing that has disturbed me the most about the FAO's program is that they do not intend to spray in the grasslands. They plan only a very spotty crop protection effort, and it seems to me that this will cut off the meat supply and milk supply if the cattle have nothing to eat because the grasshoppers are devouring the grasslands.

Kane: Most importantly, it is one of the ways of desertification. If they don't have anything to eat there, sometimes the people cut off the branches of the trees, and the cattle go down sometimes into the southern part of the country. Sometimes, we even have cattle from Mauritania crossing the river coming into Senegal to eat. I don't know if you have seen camels going in herds trying to find food; they eat everything. It is part of the process of desertification in some areas.

Q: That is what happened in the United States in the 1930s,

when they stopped controlling for grasshoppers.

Kane: It brought the dust bowl.

Q: How did the population respond to this spray program?

Kane: The population was prepared for this program because, by radio and by some of our people, we advised them to take care of the water and the cattle during this period. This product [malathion] is not harmful for humans, but we want to take extra precautions. I even see in our paper, *Le Soleil*, that everything went well, the population has accepted it, and hopefully it succeeded.

But it doesn't mean that everything is solved, because we think that before the end of the rainy season they might have some occurrence of grasshoppers in other places. That's why we have asked for the planes not to leave, in case we need another period of spraying.

Q: Is that because, after the rains, the grasshoppers will breed again, even if only a few are left?

Kane: Exactly. This is the case and we don't want them to spread in some other areas.

Q: What about the neighboring countries and the infestation there? How will the program in Senegal affect them?

Kane: In our organization, the Interstate Committee Against Drought and Desertification (called CILSS), we tried to exchange information, mainly between Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania. I might say that the initiative I took here with my colleagues from Mali and Mauritania brought the AID people to act very quickly, because we went to see them, and Mr. Edelman had just come back from Mali and was conscious of the disaster. So we said that we need to do it quickly and effectively, before Sept. 15. Fortunately, this has been achieved for Senegal, but in the other countries, it's a little slower. These grasshoppers and locusts don't know any frontiers, so they might move from Mauritania to Senegal, or from Mali to Senegal, and back and forth. This is why we think that action needs to be taken in the other countries.

Q: But your country is the only one where the big DC-7s have sprayed?

Kane: Yes, because we did not accept the advice of some experts saying that we did not need these big planes, what we needed was spraying on the ground or spraying with small planes. So we decided ourselves to do it quickly with the big planes, and I can say it was effective in our country. Perhaps it will help the others to understand that big action is needed sometimes.

Q: How did the decision come to be made? You said that you had opposition from some of the experts, but your own experts knew that they needed a big-plane effort.

Kane: Yes. It came from the President himself. He talked to me, and he asked me to do a certain type of work with the

State Department and AID, and I reported to him after I did it. He himself decided and instructed the Minister of Rural Development to take quick and strong action. So I can say that even some experts were caught short, since the decision was made at the highest level.

Q: Historically, what has been the situation with grasshoppers and locust plagues in your country? Have you had this kind of infestation in the past?

Kane: Oh yes, I remember when I was young, 1950 or 1956—I don't remember exactly—a lot of swarms of locusts at the time. I tell you that when they pass in a country or a region, nothing stays on the ground. Even the trees suffer, they eat everything edible. They leave only what they cannot eat. It is terrible, mainly during the rainy season. If it comes during the dry season, it's less harmful.

Q: Knowing this horrifying prospect, it's hard to understand why large-scale action wasn't taken sooner elsewhere.

Kane: One of the reasons is that, for a long time, we did not suffer from locusts. The two organizations created to combat migrant locusts or solitary locusts in West and East Africa finally did not do any work; they did not have the means to do it. The planes and equipment they had were rotting. And now when we need them, unfortunately they do not have the means to do it. That's why we had to ask for emergency assistance from countries like the United States, Canada, the European countries, and Japan. Some of them gave money to help buy the products, some of them, like the United States, intervened with planes. The Canadians are still there, and I heard that the British and the Danish are ready to help, too.

Q: Does Senegal intend, from the top level, to help other countries take more of a strong stand and say that they want the big planes?

Kane: Yes. Our President is the chairman of that organization that I was talking about, the CILSS, which has its headquarters in Ouagadougou. Each year they have a meeting of heads of state and one of them is designated to be the current chairman. This year it is the President Abdou Diouf of Senegal. . . .

If the other countries think that it is needed, to pursue it and ask for more assistance, I think that the United States is ready to help and let the planes go to Mali, or Burkina and Mauritania. The planes are grounded now in Senegal waiting to be used.

Q: I have tried to find out from the United States why the planes did not already go to Burkina, or to Mali, or to Niger, which requested this aid.

Kane: I don't know what is the reason. These countries have good relations with the United States and we, as I said, had made a joint request—Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal—to

obtain the assistance of the United States. Maybe it is because of some bureaucratic problems in these countries.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your background before you became Ambassador here?

Kane: It's a long story! I started my career here in the United States as Minister Counselor for two years, at the same time covering the U.N. 1966-67. Then I worked for seven years as secretary-general of an economic regional organization called OCAM. This is the organization that created many

specialized institutions, regional schools in West and Central French-speaking Africa. Then I was asked to become Ambassador to Canada for four-and-one-half years, and then I went to the U.N. as Permanent Representative of Senegal for two years, 1979-80. From 1980 to 1982, I was Minister of State in Senegal, and then I decided to run for election, and I was elected for five years, but after two years I thought that I was losing part of my time, and I decided again to enter the diplomatic service, because I am a foreign service career officer. So, I was appointed here in August 1984.

Locust plague continues

The successful large-plane effort in Senegal stands in sharp contrast to the disastrous infestation of locusts and grasshoppers that continues to sweep across the continent. As was absolutely predictable, the policy of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization—small-scale, spotty spraying efforts around croplands, ignoring the vast grassland areas where the pests breed—has allowed the destruction of crops that can only lead to more famine and more deaths.

As the country-by-country report indicates, the situation is grave in West Africa and the Sahel. In East Africa and southern Africa, where locust eggs are expected to hatch during October-December, there is still time to mount the kind of big-plane effort that could stem further disaster. The United States and its allies must bypass the genocidal policy of the FAO and fund a crash program on the scale to get the job done.

Here is the situation in West Africa, as reported in the most recent bulletins of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the FAO's Emergency Center for Locust Operations in Rome:

Senegal: Abundant rains at the end of September spawned a second generation of hoppers, some in the already treated areas and others in untreated areas, totaling 650,000 hectares. The DC-7s' second round of aerial spraying with malathion was completed Oct. 17.

Gambia: The government declared a disaster Oct. 14, as more cropland came under attack. According to the U.S. AID, the DC-7s are scheduled to spray soon; 250,000 hectares are considered as top priority and another 120,000 hectares of grassland will be done if possible.

Mali and southeastern Mauritania: FAO reported that 130,000 more hectares in Mali required treatment in October, but that there were "pesticide shortages." In Mauritania, FAO reported another 170,000 hectares re-

mained to be treated, with grasshoppers at densities of 150 per square meter. The U.S. AID reports, "The window is rapidly closing and not enough time remains to use only small aircraft." The DC-7s sprayed Mali and southeastern Mauritania on Oct. 14, covering 40,000 hectares of the worst infested areas with malathion. In addition, small planes were scheduled to do more targeted spraying.

Chad: Locust swarms invaded the capital Ndjamena, and the government began aerial spraying there Oct. 6. Although AID reported, "The pests impede the flow of traffic and paralyze certain activities at nightfall," AID opposed the spraying on the basis that the locusts were "not causing any harm" and that it was a "waste of precious resources" to direct pesticide at something other than crops.

Burkina Faso: Crop damage was heavy, after the FAO acted to prevent the DC-7s from doing large-scale spraying.

In Botswana, where the government spent \$1.6 million last year fighting the brown locust, the "most dangerous threat from locusts . . . is now to be found," according to the FAO. Yet, when Botswana requested \$8 million in aid to fight the plague and keep it from spreading, the second in command at the FAO's Emergency Center for Locust Operations scoffed, saying that this amount was far too much to spend in one country.

The early breeding in Botswana and favorable weather conditions for hatching mean that the surrounding countries—Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Swaziland—are threatened as well, if the locusts are not effectively checked in Botswana. A new generation of brown locusts is produced every six weeks, and if the soil is dry, the eggs can survive for years in the soil without hatching, so it is extremely important to eradicate the hoppers when they do hatch. Each locust generation is 10 times the size of the previous one.

One promising development is the ongoing cooperation of the government of South Africa with the neighboring black African states on locust eradication.

—*Marjorie Mazel Hecht*