



DAN FLYNN

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***Flynn Present as Mercy Ships Founders and Chief Eye Surgeon Receive Lifetime Award***

**Cotonou, Benin, West Africa** - Representative Flynn, who spent the last few weeks serving on *Africa Mercy*, was present when Mercy Ships was honored by the President of the Republic of Benin for bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor. At a special State Dinner, Dr. Boni T. Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, conveyed the gratitude of his government and the people of Benin to those who serve on the *Africa Mercy*. All the Cabinet members from President Yayi's administration were in attendance. Buses carried 350 crew members, representing over 30 different nations, to the Governmental Palace in Cotonou for the formal dinner.

In addition to the state dinner, Medals were awarded to crew of Mercy Ships at the Palace, which bestowed diplomatic status and privilege to report directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in honor of the 2009 Mercy Ships Field Service. This rare privilege is primarily reserved for national diplomats and not charitable organizations. Commendations of Commandeur de l'Ordre National du Benin (or Commanders of the Republic) were given to Mercy Ships co-founders, Don and Deyon Stephens, and to Chief Eye Surgeon on the *Africa Mercy*, Dr. Glenn Strauss. This medal is highly regarded in all nations and is a lifetime award.

"It once again assures me that faith based groups can cross boundaries to needy people and bring about healing and change to the hearts, bodies and lands that governments struggle with," commented Flynn about Mercy Ships.

President Yayi also congratulated Dr. Gary Parker, who was presented with the Commandeur de l'Ordre National du Benin Medal by President Mathieu Kérékou in 2001. President Yayi conveyed his thanks to Mercy Ships for their second visit to his nation this decade and for the love and care they showed the people of Benin.

Flynn remarked, "Witnessing hundreds of volunteers that over the years have given their time and their talents is humbling. This was a refreshing event and challenges Susan and I to do more and see that others support this great effort."

**ABOUT MERCY SHIPS:** Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to deliver free, world-class health care services to those without access in the developing world. Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 70 countries, providing services valued at more than \$748 million and impacting more than 2.16 million direct beneficiaries. More than 1200 crew worldwide, representing more than 40 nations, are joined each year by 2000 short-term volunteers. Professionals including surgeons, dentists, nurses, health care trainers, teachers, cooks, seamen, engineers, and agriculturalists donate their time and skills to the effort. Mercy Ships seeks to become the face of love in action, bringing hope and healing to the poor. For more information, visit [www.mercyships.org](http://www.mercyships.org)

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