

# Atlanta the World



## On a whirlwind tour with the leader of Mali

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At the last minute, the president of Mali changes his plans.

Instead of leaving the Westin Buckhead Atlanta at 9 a.m., he grants an interview to a TV crew from Mali, his impoverished West African nation of 12 million. The interview means that President Amadou Toumani Toure will arrive in Alpharetta and Lithonia later than anticipated by Vince Farley, a retired foreign service officer and Atlanta consultant who has scheduled the president's day.

In the lobby, Farley makes a call.

"Hey, Dell. We're going to be a little late," he says. "Keep your cellphone on."

Suddenly, a man in the president's entourage motions toward the parking garage as the motorcade springs to life in a blur of screeching tires. Farley hustles into a minivan that roars up a ramp to join the caravan: six black sedans and sport utility vehicles and two silver minivans, emergency blinkers flashing, with police cruiser escorts at the front and rear.

When foreign heads of state visit Atlanta, the public usually sees them, if at all, behind a podium like the Carter Center. About 15 to 20 foreign heads of state visit Atlanta each year, the U.S. Secret Service says. The dignitaries often spend several hours seeing the sights and shaking hands in metro Atlanta. Spending a few hours last weekend with Toure cast some light on the unofficial side of a typical foreign leader's visit.

About 9:45 a.m. Saturday, a day after meetings with former



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Malian President **Amadou Toumani Toure** speaks last weekend at the Lithonia headquarters of MedShare International, a charitable group, during the West African leader's 37-hour visit to metro Atlanta.

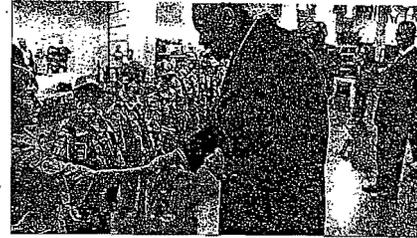
President Jimmy Carter and the president of Mozambique at the Carter Center, Toure sails past the toll booth on Ga. 400 in a caravan that also carries U.S. Secret Service agents; Toure's military aide, finance minister and protocol chief; the Malian ambassador to the United States; and several journalists.

Occasionally, a motorist zips into the caravan just long enough for a police car to shoot the driver away.

"Only in Georgia would you have someone get in the middle of a Secret Service convoy," Farley quips. "He's lucky we didn't shoot his tires out."

Around 10 a.m., the motor-

► Please see TOURE, F3



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Amadou Toumani Toure, who met with former President Jimmy Carter, also displayed the common touch. Here, he greets Boy Scout Robert Redding at Dean Machinery International.

## Toure: He does a lot in quick visit

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cade stops at Dean Machinery International Inc., where owner Walter Dean ushers Toure into a warehouse. Twelve Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts stand at attention and salute the president, known in Mali as the "Soldier of Democracy" because, after seizing power in 1991, he relinquished control following democratic elections a year later. Toure says that he, too, was once a Scout. He returns each boy's salute and shakes his hand.

Dean sells industrial machinery for printing and packaging, but he wants to show Toure something else: a plow designed to increase crop yields in places such as Mali, one of the poorest countries on earth. Dean says that he and Farley, a partner in the plow venture, want to cover their costs while keeping the plow's price low enough to make it affordable in the less developed world.

Toure strides past a banner displaying maps of Georgia and Mali to stop before a plow of beige steel. A banner on the wall reads, "Plotmaster - The Ultimate Planting Machine."

### A better plow

Dean explains that a Georgia Tech inventor designed the plow to be pulled by an all-terrain vehicle but modified it, at Dean and Farley's request, to be pulled by a horse or mule. It can reduce labor, he says, by allowing farmers to put down their hoes and let an animal pull the plow.

"Are there some countries that are buying this?" Toure, speaking in French, asks through interpreter Catherine Bass, a French native who runs a Georgia Tech program of study abroad.

"No," Dean replies. "We just finished the design. We have seven of them in a village in Kenya." He says that the Kenyan farmers tripped their crop yields in two harvest seasons.

"We are very, very interested," the Malian leader says. "We would like to have the same experience Kenya had."

A half-hour later, Toure's motorcade stops at the Lithonia offices of MedShare International, a nonprofit organization that sent \$5.4 mil-

lion worth of surplus medical supplies to the less developed world last year.

Speaking in French, Nell Diallo, MedShare's managing director, points out dental chairs, incubators, anesthesia systems, wheelchairs, wrist splints and boxes full of sterile wraps and kidney stone removal kits. The tour ends at a table draped with the yellow, green and red stripes of Mali's flag. Toure sits before about 25 African immigrants as A.B. Short, MedShare's co-founder and chief executive, speaks from a nearby podium.

### Thanks to volunteers

Short says that MedShare has sent two containers of supplies and equipment to Mali. One held \$130,000 worth of stethoscopes, catheters, surgical gloves and other items; the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation paid the shipping cost. The other contained 52 of 1,000 surplus beds that hospital company HCA donated to MedShare.

"It's very impressive that so many people are devoted to others, to people they have never met," Toure says.

"I would like to thank and recognize the people who have put together this organization. I would like to thank the volunteers who spend their Saturday mornings here."

A Secret Service agent with arms folded chews gum beside an exit. She surveys the room, expressionless.

The motorcade covers more miles before winding along streets near Emory University, stopping at Farley's house.

Toure speaks with two reporters in the basement before climbing the stairs for a lunch of squash soup, chicken salad, fruit and pastry with

iced tea and lemonade. Farley covers most of 11 points he had hoped to make, discussing possible links between colleges and other institutions in Georgia and Mali, talking up the Plotmaster and mentioning that CARE USA, the international humanitarian agency with headquarters in Atlanta, has just hired a new president.

Toure leaves Farley's house at 2:30 p.m. By 5 p.m., he's in the air, flying back to Africa after 37 hours in Atlanta.

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AMADOU TOUMANI TOURE  
President of Mali