

CONSULAR NEWS
SENEGAL & GUINEA-BISSAU

U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal
August 2008

WELCOME U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA S. BERNICAT

Marcia S. Bernicat, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Senegal, presented her credentials to His Excellency President Abdoulaye Wade in Dakar on August 6, 2008.

Ambassador Bernicat arrived in Dakar on July 24, 2008 after having been confirmed by the Senate on May 7, 2008. She is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, and served as country director of the Office of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka Affairs in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the Department of State. Prior to this, she was director of the Senior Level Division of Human Resources at the Department of State. She also served in France, Mali, India, Morocco, Malawi and Barbados.

A New Jersey native, Ms. Bernicat has a Bachelor of Arts in History from Lafayette College and worked for Procter and Gamble before earning a Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University in 1980. She studied South Asian Affairs at the University of California, Berkeley. Her languages are French, Hindi and Russian. She is the mother of two fourteen year-old sons. Ambassador Bernicat looks forward to meeting American citizens throughout her tour in Senegal.

JOURNALISTS NATIONAL DAY OF PROTESTS

Throughout the summer there have been a number of incidents of journalists being inhibited from freely carrying out their work. The Committee for the Defense and Protection of Journalists called for a national day of protest throughout the country on August 23.

BANDITRY IN THE CASAMANCE

According to media reports, on August 19 a group of heavily armed men stopped several cars outside the village of Mampalago, in the Casamance. The attackers robbed passengers and fled with more than CFA 10 million and other goods; no one was injured in the attack.

IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISA WAIVER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announces implementation of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), which will begin to accept voluntary ESTA applications starting on August 1, 2008. ESTA is a new fully automated, electronic system for screening passengers before they begin travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver

Program. ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel to the United States, and VWP travelers are encouraged to apply for authorization as soon as they begin to plan a trip to the United States. It is anticipated that ESTA will become mandatory for VWP travelers on January 12, 2009. Learn more about [ESTA](#) on the DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website. Review the [Interim Final Rule](#) on the DHS main website. For more details please refer to www.travel.state.gov.

CRIMES IN SENEGAL

Dakar: On August 9, 2008 a male American citizen was walking with a local female companion along the sidewalk of Corniche Ouest at approximately 9:45 pm. Two men approached them, circled them and began to grab the American's pants and shirt, demanding the individuals' belongings. As the two began to give offenders their valuables, one of the assailants retrieved a sharp metal object and stabbed the American in the lower left forearm above the wrist, requiring stitches.

Kaolack: On August 5, 2008 an American arrived by taxi at the residence where he was traveling to early in the morning. As he exited the taxi and walked towards the door of the house, two men approached him, shoved him around, and stole his carry bag containing a few clothes and ran off to a scooter waiting for them.

Thies: In mid-August, while an American family was home, an unidentified man gained unauthorized access to the house for a very brief amount of time and stole a wallet. Fortunately, there was no money in the wallet.

CAUTION DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

As Ramadan quickly approaches, we know that that holiday seasons are traditionally periods of increased criminal activity in Dakar. Crimes of opportunity such as pick pocketing, purse snatching, thefts from vehicles, snatch-and-grab, etc., are commonplace on the streets of the city. Additionally, home break-ins, thefts from garages and yards, and thefts by domestics often increase.

As always, American citizens are advised to practice good security at home and on the streets. Lock up cash, jewelry and other valuables at home and use your home security alarm, if you have one. Be alert for would-be thieves while on the streets, in the marchés, at restaurants, or at the beach.

Also, American citizens are encouraged to report criminal incidents to the Consular Section by emailing consulardakar@state.gov or calling 33 829-2313. For more information about measures travelers can take to protect themselves overseas, see the Department of State's pamphlet "A Safe Trip Abroad" at http://travel.state.gov/travel/abroad_pub_safetrip.html.

SEPTEMBER HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed for the following U.S. holiday:

September 1 – Labor Day (U.S. holiday)

HOURS FOR AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

We are open for routine American citizen services Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. When you arrive at the embassy, please show your U.S. passport or proof of American citizenship to the guard and go directly to the Consular Receptionist window. You do not have to wait in line with visa applicants.

Emergency American citizen services are available during U.S. Embassy normal working hours which are Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For an after-hours emergency involving an American citizen, please call 76-383-9566.

We are also available by e-mail at consulardakar@state.gov.

HAVE YOU LEFT SENEGAL OR GUINEA BISSAU?

If you have left Senegal or Guinea-Bissau, please e-mail us at consulardakar@state.gov so we can remove your name from the warden registration database. If you would like to remain on the newsletter mailing list, please let us know in your e-mail.