

**CONSULAR NEWS
SENEGAL & GUINEA BISSAU**

**U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal
December 2006**

American Town Hall Meeting

Ambassador Jacobs will host a town hall meeting on Thursday, January 25 at 5:00 p.m. All American citizens and parents of minor American children are encouraged to attend. This meeting will focus on upcoming Senegal's planned elections in February 2007 and planning for the possibility of an avian influenza pandemic.

Reminder on Crime in Senegal

In September, we issued a Warden Message to inform Americans that the U.S. Embassy has noted a marked increase in petty crime in Senegal. In addition to a general increase in petty crime, the holiday season has been associated with increased criminal activity in Dakar. Incidents of burglaries, muggings and pick pocketing tend to rise this time of year due to the increased expenses surrounding these events. American citizens are encouraged to report criminal incidents to the Consular Section by emailing consulardakar@state.gov or calling 823-4296 ext. 2204. The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's pamphlet A Safe Trip Abroad at http://travel.state.gov/travel/abroad_pub_safetrip.html.

Demonstration Season in Senegal Has Begun

Just a reminder that public demonstrations, political gatherings, and student protests are relatively common in Senegal, both in Dakar and in outlying regions, particularly on Friday afternoons. In the past, these events have sometimes turned violent. Due to the potential for violence, U.S. citizens should avoid political gatherings and street demonstrations, and maintain security awareness at all times. For guidelines on dealing safely with public demonstrations, please see the American Citizen Services page of the U.S. Embassy Dakar website at <http://usembassy.state.gov/dakar/wwwhamcen.html>.

December's Frequently Asked Question

Q: The U.S. Embassy has a new sign posted stating that American citizens are not required to wait in line. I accompanied my Senegalese husband to his visa interview and was not allowed to go to the front of the line. Why not?

A: When the Consular Section opened the new American Citizen Services waiting room, we expanded our hours and they now overlap with visa services hours. To ensure that American citizens seeking ACS services have expedited access to the section, we instituted a policy that American citizens are not required to wait in line. However, that policy does not extend to non-American citizens who are applying for U.S. visas or other consular services even when they are accompanied by an American citizen.

New Scam Targeting American Citizens

American citizens are being approached by individuals (often someone they've "met" on the Internet) who claim to be Americans who have been robbed and injured in Africa. The State Department has not been able to confirm the identity or citizenship of these alleged Americans and the facts presented (employment, etc) usually fall apart upon closer scrutiny. If an American citizen you do not know, or who you know only from Internet correspondence, asks you for help, please refer the individual to the U.S. Embassy. If the person is an American in need of assistance, we can help. If not, this will prevent you from being scammed.

Cholera in Senegal

Cholera is an intestinal disease caused by bacteria called *Vibrio cholerae*. In Senegal, the bacteria may be in the water supply, uncooked seafood, or other contaminated foods. Cholera is very rare in the United States but there are frequent outbreaks in Africa usually associated with the rainy season and flooding.

Symptoms usually start 2-3 days after exposure and include sudden onset of severe watery diarrhea, occasional vomiting and cramping, and dehydration (loss of fluids). In severe untreated cases, death may occur in a few hours. Cholera is spread mainly through drinking water contaminated with bowel movements or vomitus from infected people. It is also spread through direct contact with the stools (bowel movements) of infected people, eating raw or undercooked seafood from polluted waters, or eating other foods that have been contaminated by dirty water, stool, soiled hands, or flies.

To prevent Cholera, drink only bottled carbonated or distilled water. If tap water is the only source, boil or treat water with chlorine. Avoid drinks with ice that may have been made with untreated water. Avoid uncooked vegetables and fruit. Fruit with intact peels (bananas and oranges) that you can peel yourself are safe. Avoid raw or undercooked meats, particularly seafood. Eat only cooked foods that are served hot. After cooking or boiling food and water, protect against contamination by flies. Avoid food and drinks from street vendors. Pay attention to personal hygiene, especially washing hands with soap and water before meals.

Avian Influenza Update

With the onset of winter and the arrival in Senegal of migratory birds from Europe, we would like to take the opportunity to remind American citizens in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau about the ongoing potential for outbreaks of Avian Influenza (H5N1) and pandemic influenza. At this time, there have been no confirmed cases of Avian Influenza in Senegal or Guinea-Bissau or in any neighboring countries.

The Centers for Disease Control advises travelers to H5N1 affected countries to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces or fluids from poultry or other animals, and to eat only thoroughly cooked poultry products.

While there are no reports of sustained human-to-human transmission of avian influenza, the U.S. government and international health agencies are preparing for a possible pandemic. American citizens should note that the Department of State cannot provide Americans traveling

or living abroad with medications or supplies even in the event of a pandemic.

The Department of State's fact sheet about Avian Influenza and pandemic influenza is online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html

The Department of State's fact sheet about "Sheltering in Place" is online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_3096.html

Current information about avian influenza A (H5N1) and pandemic influenza can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/qa.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

<http://www.who.int>

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

<http://www.travel.state.gov>

Crime Watch

On Saturday, November 4, at approximately 4:00 a.m., an American woman was walking with a group of four other female students from the Thiossane Night Club. A young man wearing a backpack came up from behind her and grabbed her phone from her hand. She tried to fight him off until a second young man rushed her with what seemed to be a knife. She stopped fighting and the two men took flight.

On Tuesday, November 14, during the night, a Belgian couple living in an apartment building behind the restaurants in the Pointe des Almadies was burglarized. The burglars scaled the wall of the building on the ocean side and entered via their third-floor balcony window, which was unlocked. They stole computers, cash, and other valuables. Nobody was hurt, as the robbers were relatively quiet (they "thought they heard something" but did not investigate). The burglars tried two other apartments before finding this couple's unlocked sliding glass door.

Hours for American Citizen Services

Routine American citizen services are available 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 637-9566.

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.