

**CONSULAR NEWS
SENEGAL & GUINEA BISSAU**

**U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal
December 2007**

Caution During the Holiday Season

The holiday season, and especially the weeks leading up to the Tabaski holiday, are traditionally periods of increased criminal activity in Dakar. Crimes of opportunity such as pickpocketing, 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 823-4296 ext. 2204. 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.

Demonstration Season in Senegal

Once again, we'd like to remind everyone that public demonstrations, political gatherings, and student protests are relatively common in Senegal, both in Dakar and in outlying regions, particularly on Friday afternoons. For example, on December 11, a student protest occurred in Bignona, in which a number of students were arrested and small shops in the area were destroyed. Other student protests have also taken place recently in Dakar, Thies, and Mbour. 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://dakar.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

Road to Ziguinchor

Please be aware that between now and the end of the year, vehicles wishing to travel along the main highway from Ziguinchor to S noba on the Gambian border will be required to be accompanied by a military convoy, which will likely cause lengthy delays.

In addition, please remember that the Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens avoid non-essential travel to the Casamance (composed of the Ziguinchor and Kolda region) west of the city of Kolda, except direct air travel to the Cap Skirring resort area or to the city of Ziguinchor.

If travel is deemed essential, the Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens carefully monitor the security situation before traveling. During the early part of 2007, there was an increase in fighting in parts of the Casamance region involving factions of the separatist MFDC (Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance) and the Senegalese military. Two political figures in the Casamance region were killed in 2006/2007. Reports of banditry in the area have sporadically increased with occasional vehicle attacks by armed bandits during daylight hours on well-traveled roads. On February 14, 2007, four people were injured when their vehicle did not stop at an impromptu roadblock.

Crime Watch

Two houses in the Ngor neighborhood of Dakar were recently broken into on November 18 and December 8. In both cases, the thief entered the house at night while the occupants were home asleep, stealing electronic goods, jewelry, and other easy-to-carry items. In one instance, the thief gained entry by prying open an insecure grill on a window; in the other case, a door had been left unlocked. We remind residents to keep doors and windows locked at all times, and to use home alarm systems, if you have one available.

Two women, including one American, were attacked and robbed while on Mamelle Beach in Dakar in late November. While relaxing on the beach, the two women were surrounded by a group of young men who stole their cash and cameras. One of the women was punched in the face during the incident.

An American citizen was hit by a car while crossing the street in downtown Dakar on December 8. A bus stopped to let her cross and when she peered around the bus to see if traffic was clear, she was hit by another vehicle. The gash on her head was bad enough to require two layers of stitches and overnight monitoring at the hospital.

Armed attackers robbed several vehicles in the early morning hours of November 22 on the main road between Kaolack and Tambacounda. The attack took place at about 3:00 AM when five armed and hooded men stopped five public transport vehicles and a tanker truck along a wooded stretch of road near the villages of Keur Ablaye and Yamong, about 15 km east of the town of Kougheul. The occupants of the vehicles were robbed of money, cell phones, and other goods valued at more than 5 million CFA. No injuries were reported. The attackers fled into the woods and are being actively sought by the gendarmes, who have been conducting operations in the area aimed at stopping such activities, which traditionally increase as the Tabaski holiday nears.

Several local missionaries have posted warnings on a community bulletin board regarding a young man who introduces himself as "Bernard," who claims to be a university student from Gabon. He seems to be making the rounds of missionary homes in Hann Mariste and elsewhere asking for money, while some suspect that he may be looking for an opportunity to enter homes

in order to commit theft. He is reportedly of medium build, slim, and wears a small mustache. One person mentioned he was wearing an orange shirt when he “visited.” As always, caution is advised when dealing with anyone unknown to you.

December Holidays

We will be closed for the following holidays:

December 21 – Tabaski
December 24 – Christmas Eve
December 25 – Christmas Day
January 1, 2008 – New Year’s Day

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 77-383-9566.

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.