

CONSULAR NEWS SENEGAL & GUINEA BISSAU

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

Casamance Security

In the last several months, there has been a significant increase in fighting involving factions of the Casamance separatist MFDC in southern Senegal and the Senegalese military, particularly in the northern part of Ziguinchor region. Reports of banditry in the area have also increased. On September 1, an American was killed when her vehicle hit a newly placed mine on an unpaved road in this area. The U.S. Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens avoid non-essential travel north of Ziguinchor in the Ziguinchor region and south of the Cap Skirring road and Highway 6. The Senegal Consular Information Sheet has been updated to reflect this change in the security situation in the Casamance and will soon be posted on http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

November's Frequently Asked Question

Q: My Senegalese friend asked me to write a letter of invitation for his U.S. visa application. Does he need this to get a tourist visa?

A: Your friend is not required to present a letter of invitation when he applies for a nonimmigrant visa. When your friend applies, he will be interviewed by a consular officer. During that interview your friend must overcome a presumption that he intends to immigrate to the U.S. Applicants do this by demonstrating sufficient economic, professional, social and family ties to Senegal that would compel their departure from the U.S. after a temporary visit. U.S. immigration law does not permit third parties, including American citizens, to influence a visa decision, and consular officers cannot consider information provided outside the visa application process. If you would like to assist your friend, please encourage him/her to call the U.S. Visa Information Service at 869-63-00 or visit the State Department website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

New U.S. Passport Requirements

As of January 8, 2007, passports will be required for all U.S. citizens traveling via air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, Bermuda, and all points in the Caribbean. As of June 1, 2009, passports will be required for all U.S. citizens traveling via air, land, and sea between the United States and any destination.

New Visa Waiver Program Rules

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables nationals of certain countries, including many European countries, to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. New VWP regulations require that participant countries issue electronic passports (e-Passports) by October 26, 2006; passports issued before that date are not subject to the new requirement. The following passports are currently valid for VWP travel:

- Any valid machine-readable e-Passport

- Any valid machine-readable passport issued before October 26, 2005
- Any valid machine-readable passport issued between October 26, 2005 and October 26, 2006, EXCEPT for French and Italian passports

Bearers of French and Italian machine-readable passports issued after October 26, 2005 and before October 26, 2006 may not travel to the United States on the VWP.

Machine-readable passports have two lines of text at the bottom of the biodata page designed to be scanned by an optical reader. Bearers of non-machine-readable passports may not travel to the United States on the VWP.

Information about applying for visas at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar may be found on our website at <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/sg1/wwwwhvisanen.html>. Information about the Visa Waiver Program, including a list of participant countries, is available at the following website: http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html#1.

Election Day - November 7

If you have not voted yet, it may not be too late. Check your state's voting deadline at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>. If you submitted a Federal Post Card Application after January 1, 2004, and did not receive your state absentee ballot, you should be able to submit the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Please see your state page in the *Voting Assistance Guide (VAG)*, located at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>. You can obtain a FWAB at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefwab.html>, vote it, fax it (if allowed by the state) and mail it immediately. Please refer to *Voting News Release #19* <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/releases/2006/19-2006.html> for further details.

The Integrated Voting Alternative Site (IVAS) allows citizens to see what electronic alternatives are permitted for the return of their voted ballot in their state of residence. The site is available through the FVAP website at http://www.fvap.gov/ivas/fvap_state_menu.html.

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) Update

Scientists funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases reported in the journal *Nature* that the first comprehensive analysis of an animal's immune response to the 1918 influenza virus gave new insights into the killer flu. For the complete article, go to: <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=October&x=200610021124091cnirellep0.6752283>

The U.S. Department of State has put together an Avian Influenza fact sheet to alert Americans to the Department of State's preparedness efforts with respect to a possible influenza pandemic. This fact sheet is available at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html.

Crime Watch

Between September 26 and October 10, a thief broke into an unoccupied American house in Liberte VI in Dakar and stole an IPOD, charger and 100,000 CFA.

On Tuesday, October 17, around 7:00pm, someone used a rock to break the window of a car belonging to an American citizen that was parked between the wall at the International School of Dakar and the apartment complex nearby. Several items were stolen from the car.

On Saturday, October 7, during the day, a man claiming to be a Senelec employee showed up unexpectedly at the home of an American family. The man said he needed to check the computers and pointed towards the garage while producing a false Senelec identification card that had no photo. While the homeowner went inside to verify information by phone the man left. The man was wearing a white T-shirt and blue jeans and rode a small motorcycle.

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. This privilege does not apply to visa applicants accompanied by American citizens.

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.