

# The Camel Express

Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

February 2000

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## Message from the President of FON

This edition of *The Camel Express* is dedicated as usual to the people of Niger but, in particular on this occasion, to Niger's return to constitutional democracy. The lead article on page one, and other stories inside the newsletter, provide a summary of election results and information on key members of the new government.

This issue also sports a new feature which will make a regular appearance in the newsletter - *Inside Peace Corps Niger*. The column, authored by PC Niger Country Director, Jane Bonin, appears opposite this column on page three..

Inside the newsletter you will find other news stories coming out of Niger and North America as well as updated information on the **Boston University/ Friends of Niger** chewable vitamin project; the still developing **FON Books for Niger** project; and on our quest for tax exempt status.

The kickoff to the year 2000 membership drive has gone well but we have a good distance to go before the actual membership base reflects the size of our contact list and of the number of people who receive *The Camel Express*. Enclosed with this edition of the hardcopy version of the newsletter, members of **Friends of Niger** will have received the President's Annual Report for 1999. Members who normally receive the electronic version of the newsletter will received the report in the same fashion.

The current issue of *The Camel Express* also marks the last edition that will be put out by the present Board of Directors of **FON** as the organization is due for elections in early spring. (Members will be receiving more detailed information in a separate mailing in March).

It is perhaps, then, not inappropriate for me to acknowledge and thank those who have been so helpful in the efforts

these past two years to get **Friends of Niger** back up an running - starting with Terry O'Leary, the immediate past Group Leader who almost single-handedly took **FON** out of the mothballs and put it back into circulation; and with Jai Evans who authored the **FON** website - <http://www.friendsofniger.org> - and who continues to manage the website and cope with my many demands. Valued contributions to this newsletter and to other **FON** projects have

website and cope with my many demands. valued contributions to this newsletter and to other FON projects have been made by Sue Rosenfeld, Chris Zoolkoski, Sue Bracken, Irma Sarata, Judd Lyon, Steve Lieberman, Jane Bonin, Tom Kelley, Kevin Ryan, Jim Martin, Sue Riesgraf, Ron Dube and others - most notably those of you have so generously contributed to the chewable vitamin project and who participated in [FON Reunion '99](#).

On an on-going basis, the special efforts of other Board members have been invaluable - Gabriella Maertens who, amongst other things, helped pull together the recent chewable vitamin appeal; John Soloninka who, in addition to his stellar work on Niger Net, helps manage our database and is busy launching the FON archives project; Larry Koff, who has managed against all the odds to keep the FON financial house in order; and, Maria Mar who is our point-person in D.C.

None of what has happened these past two years would, however, have been possible without the support of many of you. Thanks again.

Enjoy the newsletter. Stay in contact. And, please, join **Friends of Niger**.

Jim Schneider

President

**this is the peace corps**  
TODAY'S PEACE CORPS IS STILL THE TOUGHEST JOB YOU'LL EVER LOVE



## **INSIDE PEACE CORPS NIGER**

Dear Friends of Niger,

It's a privilege to have an occasion to be in touch with you and to know that so many people are united in our devotion to Niger and to the Peace Corps. Thanks to all of you for your continuing efforts to be helpful to the country that so many people have come to love.

I believe that the program here is in really good shape. We just took in 58 new Trainees, our one input for the year. If they all swear in, our total strength will be at 119, just about the right ratio of staff and resources to Volunteers and Trainees.

We are installed in a new building now, so when and if you return to Niger, you will not find us in the Industrial Zone. We moved last summer to a building on the road to Ouallam, just past the Stade. It's a commodious facility--bigger, brighter, cleaner, and SAFER than the previous one. In these increasingly troubled times, PC needs a building that is strong enough and has enough set-back from the perimeter wall to provide a greater measure of safety.

We are about to begin undergoing some major staff changes. Suzanne Zitmer, our APCD-Admin, leaves on March 12 for Madagascar where she will be the AO for PC there; Nelson Cronyn, APCD-Agriculture will move on in May or June, where exactly we don't know yet, probably as Director to another Francophone country. I myself, after 6 years in Africa (two in Malawi and almost 4 here), will be leaving in August. As a former professor of English, I may return to academia or I may write a book. I probably won't go overseas any time soon (except for visits to France--mon pays fêliche). I need to reconnect with my family and friends after such an extended absence. Maybe later I will apply to become a Volunteer myself!

As for Niger, the country is undergoing a surge of optimism. The new, democratically-elected president, Tandja Mamadou, is the hope of the future to many. Since his election, some of the fonctionnaires have been paid for the first time in many months, so there's a bustle about town that suggests a new sense of prosperity. The schools are also in session again.

A few words about the PC program: As you may know, we have three project sectors here in Niger--health, agriculture, and natural resource management, all operating under the general heading of Household Food Security. All our efforts are toward getting more food of the right quantity and quality on the table here. We would also like to begin thinking about restarting an education sector. When the school system broke down, Peace Corps withdrew its education Volunteers (in 1994); but now with the promise of stability and order, having teachers here again seems a more realistic possibility.

We are beginning to post PCVs further to the north. With the end of the Tuareg rebellion, the northern part of the country is largely pacified, and the Embassy has removed its restriction on official Americans traveling there. We put the first two PCVs up in Iférouane just recently. Both NRM Volunteers, they are attached to a project directed by IUCN. Maybe someday soon we can put PCVs back in Bilma, Agadez, Fergoun, Tahoua, or N'Guigmi, where so many of you ancien combattants served.

That's all the news for the moment. It's a pleasure to be in contact with you. If you have specific topics you would like to see discussed, just send them to Jim Schneider and he can pass them on to me if he thinks the the questions raised would be of interest to all of you.

Thanks for your continued support to Niger.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jane Bonin

Country Director/Niger

**Boston University & Friends of Niger Project  
- Chewable Vitamins for Niger's Children -**

**Project Update/February 2000**

In their last issue of *The Camel Express*, an appeal was made to readers of the newsletter - asking them to help fill a suitcase with bottle of children's chewable multi-vitamins. The response to that request was strong, allowing Chris Zoolkoski to carry 13,520 tablets to Niger in late 1999. The tablets were divided between the Pediatrics Ward of the National Hospital in Niamey and the SMI Hospital in Galmi.

**Project Will Be On-Going**

Because the response was so good and because additional contributions have arrived since Chris' December departure, FON and Boston University have decided to continue their cosponsorship of the project - on something of an on-going basis. The next shipment to Niger of children's chewable multi-vitamins is scheduled for April of this year.

Financial contributions, in the form of checks or money orders, should be made out to Friends of Niger and sent by mid-November to:

**Vitamins c/o Friends of Niger**

**P.O. Box 33164**

**Washington, D.C. 20033-0164**

All contributions will be earmarked for the bulk purchase of chewables. Sue Rosenfeld, Boston U's staff person in Niamey and the person whose initiative led to the creation of this project, will be responsible for carrying the April shipment.

**Other Project Updates**

**Books for Niger** - FON is seeking a North American Rotary Club to partner with the club in Niamey for the purposes of sponsoring this project. Interested parties should contact Jim Schneider at 810 827 4870 or [loranz3@msi.com](mailto:loranz3@msi.com)

or sponsoring this project. Interested parties should contact Jim Schneider at 614-261-7878 or [tolenzs@magi.com](mailto:tolenzs@magi.com).

**Tax Exempt Status** - Tom Keeley and Kevin Ryan have both volunteered to assist FON through this process. Look for another update in the next issue of *The Camel*.

**Info/Education Package on Niger** - FON is still looking for one or more people to help with this project. Please contact Jim Schneider at (see information above).

### RPCV Books & Stories

Over the past 38 years, there have been quite a few books and stories written by Niger RPCV's, particularly books written from the perspective of the experiences of their volunteer years. During the same period, other authors have also written books about Niger and its people. Here are two of the more recent.

[Stoller, Paul. \*Jaguar: A Story of Africans in America\*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. ISBN: 0226775283.](#)

[Beckwith, Carol & Marion Van Offelen. \*Nomads of Niger\*. Abradale Press, 1993. ISBN: 08109871254.](#)

### Mark Schneider Named New Peace Corps Director

On December 23, 1999, President Clinton named Mark L. Schneider as Director of the Peace Corps. Schneider is the agency's 15th Director and the second returned Peace Corps Volunteer (El Salvador 1966-68) to head the Peace Corps. He leaves his position as the assistant administrator of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), where he has served since November 1993. Prior to his work at USAID, Schneider held leadership positions at the Pan American Health Organization and the Department of State.

### Peace Corps Stamp Commemorates the 1960's



[A new U.S. postal stamp](#), dedicated to the Peace Corps, is one of a series of 15 designed to portray the 60's and part of a larger series entitled "Celebrate the Century." Other stamps which commemorate the 60's include: Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, the peace symbol and the Beatles.

### FON Sets Up Photo Archive

FON Recording Secretary John Soloninka has taken responsibility for establishing a **Friends of Niger** Photo Archive - a depository for all those photos from Niger that need to be rescued from closets and drawers and basement storage areas - while they are still salvagible. The collection will be stored on CD's and Zip discs as well as in albums and made available for reunions and other events.

Contact John at **614-261-0578** (phone); [soloninka.1@osu.edu](mailto:soloninka.1@osu.edu) (e-mail) or via **FON**.

### News Briefs from Niger

A new Hausa-language publication, named *Sauyi*, made its debut early this year in Niger. The publication, edited by Moussa Tchangari, is scheduled as a bi-monthly. Tchangari is also the publisher of *Alternative*.

Two new private radio stations and one new independent television station were recently approved by the Observatoire National de Communication (ONC). Tambara FM, a radio station that will focus on women's issues will broadcast in Niamey on 107 MHz. Souda FM will air in Dosso on 104 MHz. The TV station, Ténéré TV, can also be found in Niamey.

**Source:** Le Républicain, Kakaki-News of Niger, Groupe Alternative

**Mamadou Names 8 New Préfets  
- Opposition Parties Excluded -**

On February 11, President Tandja Mamadou appointed new préfets to the top administrative post in Niger's eight regions.

The list of préfets is as follows, with profession and party affiliation:

**Agadez** –Yahaya Yandaka, teacher (MNSD)  
**Diffa** –Issakou Abdou, administrator (MNSD)  
**Dosso** –Mahamane Yahaya, administrator (CDS)  
**Maradi** –Ali Akilou, agronomist (CDS)  
**Tahoua** –Amadou Zéiti Maïga, retired (MNSD)  
**Tillabéry** –Ibrahim Belko, administrator (MNSD)  
**Zinder** –Alio Farka, teacher (CDS)  
**CU de Niamey** –Adamou Salifou, insurance agent (MNSD)

Both Amadou Zéiti Maïga and Yahaya Yandaka, were imprisoned during the Mainassara era. All of the préfets are civilians, even in the regions of Agadez and Diffa, centers of unrest in recent years.

In another development in mid-February, President Mamadou ordered a large number of tanks, cannon and other heavy weaponry to be transferred from the presidential guard to Niger's regular army (FAN).

**Sources:** Les Internautes du Ténéré, PANA, Le Républicain, Kakaki-News of Niger.

**NIGER'S NEW CABINET**

**Prime Minister** –Mr Hama Amadou (MNSD)  
**Public Health** –Mr Assoumane Adamou  
**Rural Development** –Mr Wassalké Boukari  
**Equipment & Transport** –Mr Abdou Labo  
**Environment & the Fight against Desertification** –Mr Issoufou Assoumane  
**Water Resources, and Government Spokesman** –Mr Akoli Dawel  
**Commerce & Industry** –Mr Seïni Oumarou  
**Finance** –Mr Ali Badjo Gamatié

**Social Development, Population, Women's Issues and Child Protection** –Mme Nana Aïcha Foumakoye  
**Promotion of Small & Medium Enterprises** –Mr Souley Hassane  
**Tourism & Artisans** –Mr Rhissa Ag Boula  
**Interior** –Mr Mahamane Manzo  
**Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, & African Integration** –Mr Nassirou Sabo  
**Defense** –Mr Sabiou Dadi Gao  
**Planning** –Mr Baroumi Maliki  
**Justice, Parliamentary Liaison** –Mr Ali Sirfi  
**National Education** –Mr Ari Ibrahim  
**Communication** –Mr Amadou Elhadj Salifou  
**Higher Education, Research & Technology** –Mr Amadou Lawal  
**Labor & Modernization of the Administration** –Mme Ossey Mireille  
**Youth, Sports, & Culture** –Mr Issa Lamine  
**Privatization & Restructuring State Enterprises** –Mr Almou Oumarou  
**Mines & Energy** –Mr Yahaya Baaré

## **Animal Resources –Mr Koroné Maoudé**

**Sources:** AFP, PANA, IRIN, Kakaki

### **Standings in the Assemblée Nationale of the Fifth Republic**

MNSD Nassara, the party led by president-elect Tandja Mamadou, (with 38 seats) and CDS Rahama, the party led by the new Speaker, Mahamane Ousmane (with 17 seats) have joined forces in the new assemblée to form a legislative majority. The opposition is led by the PNDS Tarayya with 16 seats. The leader of the PNDS, Mahamadou Issoufou, was runner-up in the recent presidential elections. RDP Jamaa has 8 seats and ANDP Zaman Lahiya has 4

**Source:** CENI

### **Credits and Other Information**

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed via hardcopy, e-mail and website posting with the contributions of Sue Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Jane Bonin, Jai Evans, Sue Rosenfeld, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff and Maria Mar. Please send address changes and corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses below,

**The Camel Express** is the periodical newsletter of **Friends of Niger (FON)**. **FON** can be contacted via the post at P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164; by e-mail at [lorenz3@magi.com](mailto:lorenz3@magi.com); and you will find **FON** on the web at the following Internet address: [www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org).

#### **Board of Directors Friends of Niger**

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