

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

July 2003

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Message from the President

"Where is the Apology to the People of Niger?"

Dear Friends of Niger -

As most all of you know, Niger has recently been much in the news, the subject of an on-going controversy related to false accusations contained in George Bush's 2003 State of the Union address. Bush alleged that Iraq had attempted to purchase uranium from Niger in early 2000.

We have known, since early this year, that the documents that formed the basis of those accusations were not authentic. Such was the judgment of the International Atomic Energy Agency back in March and such since has been the judgment of many independent document examination experts.

In recent weeks, CIA Director George Tenet and White House aide Stephen Hedley have taken turns admitting responsibility for the presence of the false accusation in Bush's address. Their statements have caused the entire matter to resurface and to reclaim public attention.

Earlier this week, subsequent to discussion between members of the Board of Directors of Friends of Niger, FON President [Jim Schneider](#) submitted a letter on this and related matters to the New York Times. FON Treasurer, [Larry Koff](#), has submitted a letter on the same issues to the Boston Globe. Copies of those letters can be seen by clicking on the links above.

As you will see, Larry and I both expressed our belief that an apology is due to the people and the government of Niger. And we both also called for reinstatement of the USAID mission to Niger, closed since 1998.

On behalf of the Board, I want to encourage each of you to send your own letter to your own local newspaper. Feel free to use all or parts of either letter.

No edition of The Camel Express would be complete without a sentence or two regarding our continued need for your financial support, in the form of membership dues and in the form of donations to our project activities in the areas of microcredit, children's vitamins, and appropriate technology. We hope that you'll use the [FON 2003 Membership and Order Form](#) to renew your membership, to join for the first time, and/or to contribute to our various activities in one or more of the ways listed on the form.

Enjoy this newsletter, thanks for your continued support, please stay in contact and continue to work for peace.

Jim Schneider
President

In his June 10, 1963 speech at American University, President Kennedy said:

"What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children -- not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women -- not merely peace in our time but peace for all time."

Join Us in Portland:

Friends of Niger Gather During NPCA Conference - Weekend of August 1-3

Friends of Niger will be sponsoring several events to be held in tandem with the National Peace Corps Association leadership meetings scheduled for the first weekend of August in Portland, Oregon.

All "friends" of Niger - FON members, Nigeriens, Niger RPCVs, friends and families of current volunteers in service - are welcome to attend any of the FON events as well as many of the NPCA events.

The schedule below will be updated again within the next few days. Check back soon and/or use the [ChangeDetect](#) service. (ChangeDetect has replaced the now defunct MindIt service that was previously available on these pages). When ChangeDetect informs you that this page has changed, that will likely mean that a schedule update has been added to the page

The recently revised (as of July 23) schedule can be found below. Events are marked FON or NPCA, depending on the sponsoring organization..

Friends of Niger President, Jim Schneider, asks that all those planning to attend FON functions take the time to click on this [e-mail link](#) and send him the particulars.

And remember, **everyone** is enthusiastically welcome!!

Friday, August 1

7:30 PM - Informal First Contact Gathering/Social (FON) - location - **Accuardi's Old Town Pizza**, 226 NW Davis St, Portland (recommended by the local FON folks). This will be a chance for people to find old friends and discover new ones and start swapping stories from Niger as well as from the years since returning to North America. Smoke free.

Saturday, August 2

2:00 PM - Friends of Niger Update (FON) - TBA. This will not be a formal meeting, but a chance to receive an update on FON activities and some of the latest news from Niger. Copies of the video Brother from Niger (\$20 each) and FON T-Shirts (\$18) will be available. There is a possibility that this event may need to be integrated with one or both of the FON evening events (Friday and Saturday) for want of a suitable facility. Please check back for an update.

3:30-5:30 PM - Reception at Museum for Peace Corps Experience Exhibit (NPCA)

6:00 PM - FON Dinner/Social (FON) - location - **Jarra's Ethiopian Restaurant**, 1435 SE Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland (also

recommended by local area FON people). Jarra's has a small parking lot and street parking is also available. The restaurant is located across the Willamette River from downtown Portland. Bill Stein (90-93), who has made the arrangements with Jarra's, has asked that those planning to attend contact him by [email](#) no later than Thursday, July 31. Jarra's is also smoke free.

9:00 PM - Dance Party! Salsa music performed by Pepe and the Bottle Blondes. (NPCA) - DoubleTree Hotel, 310 SW Lincoln Street. This is a great group and will be great fun!!

FON Announces Another Trip to Niger: Planning Begins for Early 2005

The FON Board of Directors has taken the decision to begin the planning required for a second Friends of Niger trip to Niger. The first trip took place in October 2002.

According to FON President, Jim Schneider, "tentative plans envision the 2005 trip taking place early in the year - January or February."

Schneider also indicated that the 2005 trip will include many of the same features as the highly successful 2002 event, "with, perhaps, a little more emphasis on participation in service activities or work projects."

Anyone with an interest or questions related to participation in the trip is encouraged to contact [Jim Schneider](#)

Dreamweaver Travel Announces Trip to Cure Salée and Gerewol

Again, as in recent years, Dreamweaver Travel is organizing a trip to the Cure Salée and Gerewol in In Gall as part of an itinerary that includes stops in Niamey, Agadez and other locations in the north of Niger.

According to Dudley Parkinson of Dreamweaver, the likely date for the start of the Cure Salée and Gerewol will be September 25, although the date has yet to be set officially.

More information on the trip and its probable itinerary can be found by going to the [Dreamweaver website](#). Scroll down the left hand column on the front page and click on West African Trips.

New Government Announced by President Mamadou Tandja

President Mamadou Tandja named a new government on November 8, 2002. The twenty-eight member cabinet is the third government of the fifth Republic. Hama Amadou remains Niger's Prime Minister and Aïchatou Mindaoudou continues in the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation. A complete listing of the members of the new government can be found online at http://www.nigerembassyusa.org/news.html#_Toc26132109.

Second Bridge for Niamey

The Government of Niger recently announced plans for the construction of a second bridge across the River Niger at Niamey. It is anticipated that the bridge will be completed before the start of the Fifth Francophonie Games, scheduled for 2005 in Niger. According to government sources, the Kennedy Bridge, constructed by the United States in 1970, is no longer sufficient for the volume of traffic in the capital. Niamey now has a population of more than a million people.

Micro Niger - How You Can Help -

Contributions to our ongoing support for microcredit in Niger should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to: **Micro Niger** c/o FON, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164 or sent along with the [Friends of Niger 2003 Membership & Order Form](#)

FON's Founding President Establishes Grassroots Advocacy Firm

Back in the 80's Meredith McGehee led the initiative to establish **Friends of Niger**. She became the first president of the young organization and remained in that position for the best part of a decade. Over those years, she was also emerging as one of Washington's leading grassroots public policy advocates.

Meredith became Senior Vice President/ Chief Lobbyist for Common Cause, the national citizens' lobby and one of its principal spokespersons. An expert on campaign finance reform and ethics and an international speaker on citizen engagement, McGehee directed the coalition effort to pass the historic Bipartisan Campaign Finance Act of 2002 and was recently named one of the top nonprofit/grassroots lobbyists in DC.

Even more recently, Meredith has set up her own company - Meredith Strategies - which specializes in helping organizations develop and deliver programs related to public education and to direct lobbying for legislative change.

Two years ago, at the FON sponsored Celebration of Niger 2001, Meredith received a Special Achievement Award for her many contributions to **Friends of Niger** and to the people of Niger. The Board of Directors of **Friends of Niger** congratulates Meredith McGehee on her latest achievement and looks forward to working with her in the years ahead.

Vitamin Campaign - How You Can Help -

Donations to FON's ongoing vitamin campaign should be made payable to **Friends of Niger** and sent to **Vitamins, c/o FON, PO Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164** or sent along with the [Friends of Niger 2003 Membership & Order Form](#)

Video Production that Features FON Available for Purchase



The 42 minute documentary on Niger, originally produced for Canadian TV and shot in Niger in January 2002, is now available for purchase from **Friends of Niger**.

From the blurb of the video's jacket - "In a *Brother from Niger*, award winning journalist Andrew Younger brings a story of courage, hope, and struggle from one of the world's poorest countries. *Brother from Niger* follows **Friends of Niger** president Jim Schneider as he returns to a country he once called home, a country that's still as poor as when he left it.

The video was shot on location in Niamey, Maradi, Matamaye, Botsotsoua, Kantche and Zinder and includes interviews with Haoua

Diatta of the Oxcart Project as well as with Schneider, representatives of FON's Nigerian partner organizations and others.

Copies of the videotape may be purchased for \$20 each (2 for \$35). Use the [FON 2003 Membership & Order Form](#) or send a check or money order, made payable to **Friends of Niger**, to **Video, c/o FON, PO Box 33164, Washington, DC, 20033-0164.**

“Serve, serve, serve. That's the challenge. For in the end it will be the servants that save us all.” - Sargent Shriver .

Friends of
Niger

**You're Gonna
Love This T-Shirt**

**Available in 4
Sizes
- S, M, L, XL**



**Makes a
Great
Gift!!**

**It'll Look
Good on
You as
Well!!**

***Introducing - Friends of Niger T-Shirts...
You're gonna love this T-Shirt!!***

Based on a design originally created by our neighbors at Friends of Burkina Faso, FON had produced its first and very own T-shirt. The short-sleeved shirts are 100% cotton, pre-shrunk beefy-T, natural muslin-colored fabric. The design (above) is four color: brown, black and the orange and green of the flag of Niger. You'll notice a nifty proximity map of Niger within the map of Africa which appears in the branches of the baobab tree. The shirts are available in Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large sizes and sell for \$18 each, shipping included. Use the [FON 2003 Membership & Order Form](#) or send a check made out to **Friends of Niger** (indicating the number of shirts by size), along with your name and address to: **Shirts. c/o Friends of Niger, P.O. Box 33164, Washington, D.C., 20033-0164.**

Credits and Other Information

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 email at lorenz3@magi.com; and you will find **FON** on the web at the following Internet address - www.friendsofniger.org.

This edition of **The Camel Express** was prepared, produced and distributed by Sue & Don Bracken, Irma Poots Sarata, Judd Lyon, Meredith McGehee, Bill Stein, Gabriella Maertens, John Soloninka, Larry Koff, Penni St. Hilaire. Please send address changes and

corrections, as well as any queries to **The Camel Express** at any of the addresses above.

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2003 MEMBERSHIP & ORDER FORM