

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Country briefing – Senegal

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Summary

Senegal's image as a stable pocket in the region is at threat. The country's first cocaine smuggling scandal involves high-ranking security officials and exposes infighting in their ranks. President Macky Sall's ruling coalition has fallen apart, and Sall is waiting for the March 2014 local elections to declare the coalition void. Coalition partners have pressured Sall to extend the illicit enrichment investigations to his allies and to contracts signed whilst he was prime minister between 2004 and 2008. With a lack of consensus in government Sall has resorted to ruling by decree, authorising \$200m of state funds without parliamentary approval. He has also moved to control the local private press through tax exemptions, replicating the strategy of the former president Abdoulaye Wade. Karim Wade's position has improved, although his support among the electorate remains low. The management and security at Aéroport Léopold Sédar Senghor has deteriorated and disruptions are likely.

Security sector issues come to the fore

Senegal's image as a secure pocket in an unstable region and the reputation of its security sector is in question. To add to the increased risk of Salafist extremism and terrorist attacks in **Dakar** since the **Mali** intervention in January 2013¹, drug smuggling is also increasing. On 17 July minister for interior **Pathé Seck** confirmed a leaked report from the **Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Stupéfiants (OCRTIS, Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs)** that implicated several high-ranking security personnel of collusion with cocaine traffickers.²

The scandal also highlights divisions within the security sector hierarchy. **Cheikhena Cheikh Saadbou Keïta** – sacked as commissioner of OCRTIS last week – authored and leaked the report to the press. He accused his predecessor **Abdoulaye Niang**, the current **Directeur Général de la Police Nationale (DGPN)** of making deals with traffickers. The leak was part of a “war between the police leaders”, according to Seck.

¹ Sources, several well-placed, Senegal

² African Press Agency, 17 July 2013

“Keita claims he received phone calls from drug dealers who wanted to buy cocaine that the police had seized. He claimed his predecessor Niang was involved in these type of deals.”³

A number of sources point to the report as confirmation that drug smuggling had been “going on for a long time...it’s gone beyond the foot soldiers”⁴. “It’s an extraordinary story for Senegal. When a high-ranking figure is engaged in this you have to ask questions.”⁵ However, the government and media typically cover up cocaine smuggling so as not to undermine the country’s image. Local journalists reporting on the case allegedly received death threats.⁶ President Macky Sall and Seck launched an investigation on 19 July and replaced Niang on 26 July.⁷ But local sources believe little will emerge from the investigation.

“Cocaine deals are here too, Senegal is also a route. It’s just done more covertly. Also the media is not looking for it in fear that it would damage the country’s image if something is found...the NGOs and banks will start to move out.”⁸

Two other incidents also suggest a lack of discipline within the security forces. **Division des Investigations Criminelles (DIC)** officers claim that **Jöel Kmanou**, a Cameroonian arrested at the **Aéroport Léopold Sédar Senghor** on 15 July posing as a special advisor to President **Macky Sall**, received assistance from the gendarmerie to gain intelligence on Mali.⁹ In addition, local NGOs including **Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme (Raddho)** have demanded an investigation into the death of **Antoine Robert Sambou**, a young fisherman, from ill-treatment and torture by soldiers on 2 July 2013 at **Pointe Saint-Georges, Casamance** region.¹⁰ The incident is rare and the military is known to be generally disciplined and professional. However, former president **Abdoulaye Wade** (2000 – 2012) “manipulated” the police.

“Wade had a lot of time for the police and used patronage with appointments. The military is still regarded as one of the strongest institutions in the country...we have seen that it is professional and steps out of the way of politics. Wade wasn’t sure if the military would defend him and turn on protesters during the protests in 2011-2012. The police did...they employed brutal tactics and opened fire on protesters.”¹¹

³ Source, West Africa correspondent, Dakar

⁴ Source, business owner and former analyst, Dakar

⁵ Source, francophone journalist, Dakar

⁶ Koaci, 24 July 2013

⁷ Koaci, 26 July 2013

⁸ Source, business owner and former analyst, Dakar

⁹ Libération, 17 July 2013

¹⁰ RFI, 7 July 2013

¹¹ Source, diplomat, US

... as President Sall's coalition breaks up

Members of President Sall's ruling coalition **Benno Bokk Yaakar (BBY)** have "revolted".¹² The coalition is a loose grouping of representatives of predominantly left-leaning parties which supported Sall in the run-off presidential election in March 2012 to defeat Wade. On 15 July **Idrissa Seck 'Idi'**, the most prominent member of the coalition, openly criticised the president over the increased cost of living, lack of employment, power cuts and company closures.¹³ BBY also lost **Abdoulaye Bathily**, a prominent figure within the coalition, who left his position as minister of state in the presidency on 7 July to take up a role with the **United Nations (UN)** in **Mali**.¹⁴

Aside from the government's "coordination problem"¹⁵, the coalition is divided over the illicit enrichment investigations against former officials. The "hardline" BBY members call on the investigations to move forward into the courts and on to other former Wade-era officials.¹⁶ Sall and his **Alliance pour la République (APR)** prefers "negotiations" – in which the government demands companies 'admit' to wrongdoing despite no evidence of such, pay a fine and continue to operate or commit to new investment so the government can 'save face'.¹⁷ Sall also remains cautious about the investigations into contracts signed whilst he was prime minister between 2004 and 2008. "He can't chop their heads off without chopping off his own." He is allegedly waiting until the local elections in March 2014 to "kick them [the hardliners] out and end this coalition."¹⁸

*"Sall has never been serious about illicit enrichment...he is using it to try to get a couple of people out of the way, for political reasons. The litmus test will come if one of his own allies or appointees is fingered. Then we'll see."*¹⁹

In the meantime, Sall's rule is disordered and authoritarian. He commands the presence of his entire cabinet to "attend" his arrival and departure for foreign visits.²⁰ Since coming to power he has signed 26 decrees – authorising \$200m of state funds – without parliamentary approval.²¹ The 'décrets d'avance' are supposed to be used for emergencies but Sall's decrees include restoration of a road to Mali and a conference centre for a *Francophonie* summit in 2014. The trend highlights ongoing corruption risk in Senegal. In the **Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2013**,²² 66% of those interviewed said that corruption is a serious problem in the public sector.

The Sall presidency has turned into a "PR disaster".

¹² Source, NGO executive, Dakar

¹³ Interview in Jeune Afrique, 15 July 2013

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, 17 July 2013

¹⁵ Source, NGO executive, Dakar

¹⁶ Source, several, Dakar

¹⁷ Source, business executive, Dakar

¹⁸ Source, business owner and former analyst, Dakar

¹⁹ Source, francophone journalist, Dakar

²⁰ Source, business executive, Dakar

²¹ Africa Confidential, 5 July 2013

²² A survey of 114,000 people in 107 countries

“He has not linked the illicit enrichment case to the broader problems in the country. There is the view that he is chasing shadows with these investigations when day-to-day problems get worse. Most of the opinion leaders are Wadists [supported former president Wade]... they are leading the debate, driving opinion. The atmosphere is becoming anti-government quickly.”²³

....and Wade’s position improves but his PDS struggles

As the government’s image deteriorates, **Karim Wade** has received further support from a number of local and regional political figures. *“I’m surprised with the number of high-level people that are visiting him.”*²⁴ On 16 July **Souleymane Ndéné Ndiaye**, a former prime minister, visited Wade in prison.²⁵ **Denis Christel Nguesso**, the influential son of **Republic of Congo's** president, **Denis Sassou Nguesso**, visited Wade on 6 July.²⁶ A West African correspondent also confirmed local press reports that Ivorian President **Alassane Ouattara** sent **Guillaume Soro**, head of the **Côte d’Ivoire** parliament who is positioned to succeed Ouattara, to Dakar in June to support Wade and pressure the Sall government. Prior to the tax exemption for the private press on 13 July (see below), press stories also centred on Wade’s efforts to improve his Wolof and knowledge of the Koran as he prepares to challenge Sall in the 2017 elections.²⁷ That said, Wade’s support within the electorate remains low. Street protests calling for his release have ceased.²⁸ In addition, the leadership of Wade’s **Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS)** remains embroiled in a succession battle. *“Infighting has intensified...there has been an exodus of local party leaders, the latest being **Ouri Bâ**, the Mayor of **Tambacounda.**”*²⁹

....and Sall moves to control the local press

In a *“blatant”* attempt to control the local press President Sall exempted the entire local private press from its taxes, totaling \$15m (CFA7.5bn), on 13 July.³⁰ The move halted increasingly sympathetic coverage of Karim Wade.

“Sall wants to dominate the airwaves. Everyone is shocked, the president promised a change when he came to power but this is further evidence he will run the country the same way as Wade. He is doing the same as Wade. He wants to control the media.”

²³ Source, business owner and former analyst, Dakar

²⁴ Source, diplomat, US

²⁵ Senenews, 16 July 2013

²⁶ Senenews, 6 July 2013

²⁷ Press Afrik, 10 July 2013

²⁸ Source, several including NGO executive; and business owner and former analyst, Dakar

²⁹ Africa Confidential, 5 July 2013

³⁰ Le Quotidien, 19 July 2013

...They [Sall's team] are also feeding information to the press because they think it is the only way to counteract the Wadists. As you can see there is not much from Wadists in the press since the tax exemption.”³¹

The press is “*not playing its role.*” It provides little checks on deals being passed by government.

*“L’Observateur [owned by **Youssou N’dour**, minister for tourism] is going the same way as La Gazette [founded by **Abdou Latif Coulibaly**, minister for good governance]it is now linked to someone in government and therefore lost its credibility. I wouldn’t say it’s the headmaster’s voice, that is the role of Le Soleil, but it’s becoming more much more docile on looking into the government. So it’s more difficult to find out what is going on in government.”³²*

Disruptions at Dakar airport

Management and security at **Aéroport Léopold Sédar Senghor** have deteriorated and disruptions are likely. On 19 July **Menzies Aviation** ceased airport handling operations as the strategic partner to **Aviation Handling Services (AHS)**. The UK Plc pointed to the “*unilateral actions*” of a provisional administrator appointed by the **Cour de Répression de l’Enrichissement Illicite (CREI)** which undermined its ability to operate.³³ Menzies provided ground handling services to a number of airlines servicing Dakar notably **Delta** and **Turkish Airlines**.

In addition, the government implemented a new reciprocal biometric visa system at the airport on 1 July. All foreigners except citizens from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, **Morocco** or **Mauritania** are now required to have a biometric visa for a period of 0-90 days. Leading tourism operator **Nouvelles Frontières** says the new biometric visa system is “*total confusion*” due to the airport processes and costs. Studies estimate a 30% drop in tourist flows due to the new visa rules, risking \$175m - \$212m loss in tourism income.³⁴ Entries to Dakar airport have already declined from 78,652 in January 2012 to 51,602 in January 2013.³⁵

Implications

The latest security forces developments undermine the country’s stability at a time when security risk is increasing across the region. This stems notably from northern Mali’s crisis where support for Salafist extremist Islam is raising the risk of terrorist attacks. Security force collusion in cocaine trafficking has threatened the stability of a number of West African states and caused the collapse of

³¹ Source, business owner and former analyst, Dakar

³² Source, francophone journalist, Dakar

³³ Sud Quotidien, 22 July 2013

³⁴ France 24, 13 July 2013; Jeune Afrique, 2 July 2013

³⁵ Jeune Afrique, 2 July 2013

Senegal's neighbour **Guinea-Bissau**. These latest developments will not play well with the electorate and will further swing opinion against the president, with four years of his term remaining.

Sall's control of state institutions is weak. The first casualty is international and domestic investment in the economy. The political sphere was next, with the break up of Sall's coalition which has in turn introduced increasing rule by decree. Sall now seems to be losing control of the police.

The government will struggle to attract investment needed to restart the economy and create jobs. Menzies Aviation's exit is effectively a disinvestment and bodes ill for the planned new airport on the outskirts of Dakar **Aéroport International Blaise Diagne de Diass (AIBD)**. The exit is a result of a flawed, poorly executed, potentially politically motivated illicit enrichment investigation against former officials and companies associated with the former regime. Losing a global name in the airport handling industry will further degrade the security situation at the Aéroport Léopold Sédar Senghor which is already grappling with the transfer to the new biometric visa system.

A flawed, politically manipulated corruption investigation will damage the country's anti-corruption credentials which will dampen the long-term investment outlook. Senegal needs to invest in credible, evidence-based investigations into current corruption (drugs) and past corruption in order to create a sufficient deterrence to future corruption.