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**Thomas SANKARA**  
(Phonetic: sahNKAHrah)

**BURKINA FASO**

*President, National  
Revolutionary Council  
(since August 1983)*

*Addressed as:  
Mr. President*



Capt. Thomas Sankara installed himself as Head of State after leading the country's third coup in as many years. He has since created locally organized Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, and he has publicly proclaimed a nonaligned foreign policy and expressed unconditional support for worldwide liberation movements. Soon after taking power, Sankara made trips to Libya and North Korea and also established closer ties to the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Albania. Deeply nationalistic, the President changed the name of his country from Upper Volta to the more indigenous Burkina Faso in July 1984.

Sankara, who is of mixed Peuhl and Mossi ethnic origin, was born in the north central town of Yako. After receiving military training at the cadet academy in Antsirabi, Madagascar, during 1970-72, he returned home, where he earned a reputation as a war hero in a 1974 border war with Mali. He then received officer's training in France at the National Center for Commando Training in Mont-Louis and paratroop training at Pau. During the late 1970s Sankara served as commander of the Paracommando School at Po. In January 1981 he completed a six-month infantry officer advanced course in Montpellier, France, and he was later deputy director of operations and training (G-3) on the General Staff of the Burkinan Army from February until September 1981. He subsequently served briefly as Secretary of State for Information under President Sayé Zerbo and as Prime Minister in the government of President Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo.

Sankara, 34, speaks fluent French and some English. He is married and has two children.

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