

Thomas SANKARA
(Phonetic: sahnKAHrah)

BF

BURKINA FASO

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

Addressed as: Mr. President

Capt. Thomas Sankara installed himself as Head of State after leading a coup. He changed his country's name from Upper Volta to the more indigenous Burkina Faso in July 1984.

Sankara is of mixed Peuhl and Mossi ethnic origin. He received military training at the cadet academy in Antsirabi, Madagascar, during 1970-72. He earned a reputation as a war hero in a 1974 border conflict with Mali. Subsequently, he received officers' paratroop training in France.

During the late 1970s he served as commander of the Paracommando School at Po. In January 1981 he completed a six-month infantry officer advanced course in France. Sankara was deputy director of operations and training (G-3) on the General Staff of the Burkinan Army during 1981. He then served as Secretary of State for Information for several months. He was named Prime Minister in January 1983 but held that position for only three months.

Sankara, 35, almost always appears publicly wearing camouflage fatigues and a pearl-handled pistol. The President neither smokes nor drinks. He enjoys playing the guitar and likes to dance. In addition to his indigenous tongue, Sankara speaks fluent French and some English. He is a Roman Catholic. He is married; his wife has studied economics. The couple has two young children.



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