

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE FLASH NOTE [REV. 1]

**Unrest in the barracks - storm in a teacup**

*Although dramatic, the events in the northern towns of Bouaké, Korhogo and Daloa over the last 18 hours pose **no threat to the political or economic stability of Côte d'Ivoire.***

1) At first blush, the optics appear quite alarming, given that **it was in Bouaké that CIV's civil war erupted** in 2002, when soldiers from the country's economically disadvantaged reacted to a series of ethnically discriminatory moves by the political leadership (historically controlled by the South) by launching a coup d'état that morphed into **a decade-long conflict.**

2) But there the similarities end. First, the insurgents of yesteryear are actually the government of today. It is an inconvenient truth that **Alassane Ouattara<sup>1</sup> owes his incumbency to the leader of the Forces Nouvelles** that staged the 2002 rebellion.

This explains why the former warlord Guillaume Soro was appointed president of the National Assembly upon Ouattara's inauguration in 2010<sup>2</sup>. Large numbers of his **former colleagues were incorporated into the armed forces** at the same time and typically deployed in the same northern region that they had ruled as warlords for the better part of a decade<sup>3</sup>.

3) The source of the trouble? While the mutineers have presented no formal demands as yet, 'unpaid bonuses and perks' is the word in Abidjan – an explanation we consider inadequate. Nevertheless, this **issue may well have provided the spark.** Meanwhile, the city of Bouaké has a long-standing tradition of militancy, witness the riots that greeted the electricity tariff increase in June 2016.

4) A more likely motive for the unrest in the barracks could be **a long overdue attempt by Ouattara to rein in some of the excesses of Forces Nouvelles veterans.** Many of these former warlords have continued operate the same **lucrative criminal operations<sup>4</sup> - in particular protection rackets and 'conflict' mining** - that sustained and indeed, enriched them during the civil war.

5) Observers of the W. African political scene will recall that the **2012 coup d'état which toppled the ATT government in Mali also commenced as a protest by agrieved soldiers.** Their sole motive for marching on the headquarters of ORTM, the national broadcaster, was to air their frustration at the total incompetence with which the fight against combined Tuareg and Islamist insurgency was being led.

Under ATT's corrupt administration the institutions of government (civil service, army, police), had become so hollowed out that **the whole edifice literally collapsed in the face of this peaceful demonstration<sup>5</sup>.**

6) The situation could not be more different in Côte d'Ivoire where the post-war boom remains in full effect and the institutions of government robust, with Alassane Ouattara re-elected to a second and final term in October 2015; and a new constitution<sup>5</sup> adopted following a November 2016 referendum.

**In short, we see no major cause for alarm.**

<sup>1</sup> The first ever president hailing from the country's North. | <sup>2</sup> Since 2012, Soro has been president of the National Assembly.

<sup>3</sup> Upon his inauguration as president in 2010, one of Ouattara's first appointments was to name Soumaïla Bakayoko the *Forces Nouvelles'* military chief of staff was appointed army chief of staff

<sup>4</sup> In April 2014, a UN report accused Col. Issiaka Ouattara (*nom de guerre*, 'Wattao'), of controlling a conflict diamond operation operated by serving officers of the Ivorian army, in the western region of Senguéla.

<sup>5</sup> Unable to broadcast their planned message since staff at the TV station had fled at the approach of the *Berets verts*, the protesting soldiers decided to deliver their message to Amadou Toumani Traoré, the head of state, in person. As they marched towards the presidential palace most of the troops on guard simply fled, with the exception of a squadron of *Berets rouges* that was quickly subdued.

<sup>5</sup> The new constitution eliminates the infamous *'Ivoirité'* provision (i.e. Article 35) restricting eligibility for the presidency to citizens with two Ivorian parents. It also creates a post of Vice President who replaces the head of the national Assembly as first in line of presidential succession.

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