Background Note: Côte d'Ivoire

PROFILE

OFFICIAL NAME:
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Geography
Area: 322,500 sq. km. (124,500 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New Mexico.
Terrain: Forested, undulating, hilly in the west.
Climate: Tropical.

People
Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ivoirian(s).
Population (2004 est.): 18,700,000.
Annual growth rate: 3.8%, with immigration.
Ethnic groups: More than 60.
Religions: Indigenous 10%-20%, Muslim 35%-40%, and Christian (Catholic, Protestant and other denominations) 25%-35%.
Languages: French (official); five principal language groups.
Education: Years compulsory—school is not compulsory at this time. Attendance—57%. Literacy—51%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—111/1,000. Life expectancy—46 years.

Government
Type: Republic.
Branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative— unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court (3 chambers: judicial, administrative, auditing); Constitutional Council.
Administrative subdivisions: 19 regions, 58 departments, 196 communes.
Political parties: Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), Rassemblement des Republicaines (RDR), Union pour la Democratie et pour la Paix en Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI), numerous other smaller political parties operate in Cote d'Ivoire.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy
GDP (2004 est.): $17.4 billion.
Annual real growth rate (2004 est.): 0.7%. Real GDP declined by 1.6% in 2002 and declined by 1.7% in 2003.
Natural resources: Petroleum (offshore) discovered in 1977, production began in 1980; output in 2004 was 22,000 barrels per day. Gold mining began in early 1990s.


Industry (21% of GDP, 2004): Types--food processing, textiles.

Services (2004): 52% of GDP.


PEOPLE
Cote d'Ivoire has more than 60 ethnic groups, usually classified into five principal divisions: Akan (east and center, including Lagoon peoples of the southeast), Krou (southwest), Southern Mande (west), Northern Mande (northwest), Senoufo/Lobi (north center and northeast). The Baoules, in the Akan division, probably comprise the single largest subgroup with 15%-20% of the population. They are based in the central region around Bouake and Yamoussoukro. The Betes in the Krou division, the Senoufos in the north, and the Malinkes in the northwest and the cities are the next largest groups, with 10%-15% each of the national population. Most of the principal divisions have a significant presence in neighboring countries.

Of the more than 5 million non-Ivoirian Africans living in Cote d'Ivoire, one-third to one-half are from Burkina Faso; the rest are from Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, and Mauritania. The non-African expatriate community includes roughly 20,000 French and possibly 100,000 Lebanese. As of mid-November 2004, thousands of expatriates, African and non-African, had fled from the violence in Cote d'Ivoire. The number of elementary school-aged children attending classes increased from 22% in 1960 to 67% in 1995.

HISTORY
The early history of Cote d'Ivoire is virtually unknown, although it is thought that a Neolithic culture existed. France made its initial contact with Cote d'Ivoire in 1637, when missionaries landed at Assincne near the Gold Coast (now Ghana) border. Early contacts were limited to a few missionaries because of the inhospitable coastline and settlers’ fear of the inhabitants.

In the 18th century, the country was invaded from present-day Ghana by two related Akan groups--the Agnis, who occupied the southeast, and the Baoules, who settled in the central section. In 1843-44, Admiral Bouet-Williaumez signed treaties with the kings of the Grand Bassam and Assinie regions, placing their territories under a French protectorate. French explorers, missionaries, trading companies, and soldiers gradually extended the area under French control inland from the lagoon region. However, complete pacification was not accomplished until 1915.

French Period
Cote d'Ivoire officially became a French colony in 1893. Captain Binger, who had explored the Gold Coast frontier, was named the first governor. He negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom (for the Gold Coast) and later started the campaign against Almany Samory, a Malinke chief, who fought against the French until 1898.

From 1904 to 1958, Cote d'Ivoire was a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa. It was a colony and an overseas territory under the French Third Republic. Until the period following World War II, governmental affairs in French West Africa were administered from Paris. France's policy in West Africa was reflected mainly in its philosophy of "association," meaning that all Africans in Cote d'Ivoire were officially French "subjects" without rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France.
During World War II, France’s Vichy regime remained in control until 1943, when members of Gen. Charles de Gaulle’s provisional government assumed control of all French West Africa. The Brazzaville Conference in 1944, the first Constituent Assembly of the French Fourth Republic in 1946, and France’s gratitude for African loyalty during World War II led to far-reaching governmental reforms in 1946. French citizenship was granted to all African "subjects," the right to organize politically was recognized, and various forms of forced labor were abolished.

A turning point in relations with France was reached with the 1956 Overseas Reform Act (Loi Cadre), which transferred a number of powers from Paris to elected territorial governments in French West Africa and also removed remaining voting inequalities.

**Independence**

In December 1958, Cote d’Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community as a result of a referendum that brought community status to all members of the old Federation of French West Africa except Guinea, which had voted against association. Cote d’Ivoire became independent on August 7, 1960, and permitted its community membership to lapse.

Cote d’Ivoire’s contemporary political history is closely associated with the career of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President of the republic and leader of the Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) until his death on December 7, 1993. He was one of the founders of the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), the leading pre-independence inter-territorial political party in French West African territories (except Mauritania).

Houphouet-Boigny first came to political prominence in 1944 as founder of the Syndicat Agricole Africain, an organization that won improved conditions for African farmers and formed a nucleus for the PDCI. After World War II, he was elected by a narrow margin to the first Constituent Assembly. Representing Cote d’Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959, he devoted much of his effort to inter-territorial political organization and further amelioration of labor conditions. After his 13-year service in the French National Assembly, including almost 3 years as a minister in the French Government, he became Cote d’Ivoire’s first Prime Minister in April 1959, and the following year was elected its first President.

In May 1959, Houphouet-Boigny reinforced his position as a dominant figure in West Africa by leading Cote d’Ivoire, Niger, Upper Volta (Burkina), and Dahomey (Benin) into the Council of the Entente, a regional organization promoting economic development. He maintained that the road to African solidarity was through step-by-step economic and political cooperation, recognizing the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other African states.

**1999 Coup and Aftermath**

In a region where many political systems are unstable, Cote d’Ivoire showed remarkable political stability from its independence from France in 1960 until late 1999. Under Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President from independence until his death in December 1993, Cote d’Ivoire maintained a close political allegiance to the West while many countries in the region were undergoing repeated military coups, experimenting with Marxism, and developing ties with the Soviet Union and China. His successor, President Henri Konan Bedie, was familiar with the U.S., having served as Cote d’Ivoire’s first ambassador to the U.S. Falling world market prices for Cote d’Ivoire’s primary export crops of cocoa and coffee put pressure on the economy and the Bedie presidency. Government corruption and mismanagement led to steep reductions in foreign aid in 1998 and 1999, and eventually to the country’s first coup on December 24, 1999.

Following the bloodless coup, General Guei formed a government of national unity and promised open elections. A new constitution was drafted and ratified by the population in the summer of 2000. It retained clauses that underscored national divisions between north and south, Christian and Muslim, that had been
growing since Houphouet's death.

Elections were scheduled for fall 2000, but when the general's handpicked Supreme Court disqualified all of the candidates from the two major parties—the PDCI and Rassemblement des Republicaines (RDR)—Western election support and monitors were withdrawn. The RDR called for a boycott, setting the stage for low election turnout in a race between Guei and Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) candidate Laurent Gbagbo. When early polling results showed Gbagbo in the lead, Guei stopped the process—claiming polling fraud—dismanded the election commission, and declared himself the winner. Within hours Gbagbo supporters took to the streets of Abidjan. A bloody fight followed as crowds attacked the guards protecting the presidential palace. Many gendarmes and soldiers joined the fight against the junta government, forcing Guei to flee. Having gained the most votes, Gbagbo was declared President. The RDR then took the streets, calling for new elections because the Supreme Court had declared their presidential candidate and all the candidates of the PDCI ineligible. More violence erupted as forces loyal to the new government joined the FPI youth to attack RDR demonstrators. Hundreds were killed in the few days that followed before RDR party leader Alassane Ouattara called for peace and recognized the Gbagbo presidency.

2001 Attempted Coup
On January 7, 2001, another coup attempt shattered the temporary calm. However, some weeks later, in the spring, local municipal elections were conducted without violence and with the full participation of all political parties. The RDR, which had boycotted the presidential and legislative elections, won the most local seats, followed by the PDCI and FPI. Some economic aid from the European Union began to return by the summer of 2001, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) re-engaged the government. Questions surrounding severe human rights abuses by the government during the presidential and legislative elections of 2000 remain unresolved (e.g., the mass grave at Yopougon), but day-to-day life began to return to normal. In August 2002, President Gbagbo formed a de facto government of national unity that included the RDR party.

2002 Country Divides
On September 19, 2002, rebellious exiled military personnel and co-conspirators in Abidjan simultaneously attacked government ministers and government and military/security facilities in Abidjan, Bouake, and Korhogo. In Abidjan, government forces stopped the coup attempt within hours, but the attacks resulted in the deaths of Minister of Interior Emile Boga Doudou and several high-ranking military officers. General Guei was killed under still-unclear circumstances. Almost immediately after the coup attempt, the government launched an aggressive security operation in Abidjan, whereby shantytowns—occupied by thousands of immigrants and Ivoirians—were searched for weapons and rebels. Government security forces burned down or demolished a number of these shantytowns, which displaced over 12,000 people.

The failed coup attempt quickly evolved into a rebellion, splitting the country in two and escalating into the country's worst crisis since independence in 1960. The rebel group, calling itself the "Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire" (MPCI), retained control in Bouake and Korhogo, and within 2 weeks moved to take the remainder of the northern half of the country. In mid-October 2002, government and MPCI representatives signed a ceasefire and French military forces already present in the country agreed to monitor the ceasefire line. In late November 2002, the western part of the country became a new military front with the emergence of two new rebel groups—the Ivoirian Popular Movement for the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP). MPIGO and MJP were allied with the MPCI, and the three groups subsequently called themselves the "New Forces." In January 2003, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries—Senegal (commander), Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Niger—on the ground beside the 3,000 French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line dividing the country.

Reunification Attempts
In late January 2003, the country's major political parties and the New Forces signed the French-brokered Linas-Marcoussis Accord (LMA), agreeing to a power-sharing national reconciliation government to include rebel New Forces representatives. The parties agreed to work together on modifying national identity, eligibility for citizenship, and land tenure laws which many observers see as among the root causes of the conflict. The LMA also stipulated a UN Monitoring Committee to report on implementation of the accord. Also in January 2003, President Gbagbo appointed Seydou Diarra as the consensus Prime Minister. In March 2003, Prime Minister Diarra formed a government of national reconciliation of 41 ministers. The full government did not meet until mid-April, when international peacekeepers were in place to provide security for rebel New Forces ministers. On July 4, 2003, the government and New Forces military signed an "End of the War" declaration, recognized President Gbagbo's authority, and vowed to work for the implementation of the LMA and a program of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR). On September 13, 2003, six months after the formation of the reconciliation government, President Gbagbo named politically neutral Defense and Security Ministers, after consulting with the political parties and New Forces.

2004 saw serious challenges to the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. Violent flare-ups and political deadlock in the spring and summer led to the Accra III talks in Ghana. Signed on July 30, 2004, the Accra III Agreement reaffirmed the goals of the LMA with specific deadlines and benchmarks for progress. Unfortunately, those deadlines--late September for legislative reform and October 15 for rebel disarmament--were not met by the parties. The ensuing political and military deadlock was not broken until November 4, when government forces initiated a bombing campaign of rebel targets in the north. On November 6, a government aircraft bombed a French military installation in Bouake, killing nine French soldiers and one American civilian. Claiming that the attack was deliberate (the Ivorian Government claimed it was a mistake), French forces retaliated by destroying most of the small Ivorian air force. Mayhem ensued for several days as anti-French mobs rioted in Abidjan and violence flared elsewhere. On November 15, 2004 the United Nations Security Council issued an immediate arms embargo on Cote d'Ivoire and gave leaders one month to get the peace process back on track or face a travel ban and a freeze on their assets. In April 2005, South African President Thabo Mbeki invited the leaders to South Africa for an African Union-sponsored mediation effort. The result was the Pretoria Agreement, signed April 6, 2005. The Pretoria Agreement formally ended the country's state of war, and addressed issues such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the return of New Forces Ministers to government, and the reorganization of the Independent Electoral Commission. A follow-up agreement in June 2005 laid out another framework for disarmament, elections, and the adoption of legislation required under the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. In September, the government postponed presidential elections scheduled for October 30, 2005. In October, the UN Security Council endorsed an AU decision to extend the Linas-Marcoussis peace process for an additional 12 months, with a new Prime Minister to be selected. Elections are to occur no later than October 31, 2006.

GOVERNMENT

Cote d'Ivoire's constitution of the Second Republic (2000) provides for a strong presidency within the framework of a separation of powers. The executive is personified in the president, elected for a 5-year term. The president is the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, may negotiate and ratify certain treaties, and may submit a bill to a national referendum or to the National Assembly. According to the constitution, the president of the National Assembly assumes the presidency for 45-90 days in the event of a vacancy and organizes new elections in which the winner completes the remainder of the deceased president's term. The president selects the prime minister, who is the head of government. The cabinet is selected by and is responsible to the prime minister.

The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 225 members elected by direct universal suffrage for a 5-year term concurrently with the president. It passes on legislation typically introduced by the president, although it also can introduce legislation.
The judicial system culminates in the Supreme Court. The High Court of Justice is competent to try government officials for major offenses. There is also an independent Constitutional Council which has seven members appointed by the president that is responsible for, inter alia, the determination of candidate eligibility in presidential and legislative elections, the announcement of final election results, the conduct of referendums, and the constitutionality of legislation.

For administrative purposes, Cote d'Ivoire is divided into 19 regions and 58 departments. Each region and department is headed by a prefect appointed by the central government. In 2002, the country held its first departmental elections to select departmental councils to oversee local infrastructure development and maintenance as well as economic and social development plans and projects. There are 196 communes, each headed by an elected mayor, plus the city of Abidjan with 10 mayors.

**Principal Government Officials**
- President--Laurent Gbagbo
- Prime Minister--Seydou Diarra
- Foreign Minister--Mamadou Bamba
- Ambassador to the U.S.--Daouda Diabate
- Ambassador to the UN--Philippe Djessan Djangone-Bi

Cote d'Ivoire maintains an embassy at 3421 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007; tel: 202-797-0300.

**POLITICAL CONDITIONS**
Laurent Gbagbo has been President since October 26, 2000. Gbagbo took power following a popular uprising supporting his election victory after junta leader Gen. Robert Guei claimed a dubious victory in the 2000 presidential elections. General Guei had assumed power on December 25, 1999, following a military coup d'etat against the government of former President Henri Konan Bedie. Coup attempts in 2001 and 2002 escalated into a rebellion and crisis which culminated in the January 2003 signing of an accord for a power-sharing national reconciliation government. Implementation of the 2003 accord has made halting progress, and Cote d'Ivoire remains divided, with rebels occupying some areas of the country.

Cote d'Ivoire's relations with the U.S. have traditionally been excellent, but have been somewhat strained since Section 508 restrictions curtailed nonhumanitarian aid following the December 1999 military coup. The restrictions were not lifted following the 2000 elections due to questionable governmental interference before and during the election.

Looking toward the country's future, the fundamental issue is whether its political system following the upheavals of recent years will provide for enduring stability, which is critical for investor confidence and further economic development. The political system in Cote d'Ivoire is president-dominated. The prime minister concentrates principally on coordinating and implementing economic policy. The key decisions—political, military, or economic—continue to be made by the president.

However, political dialogue is much freer today than prior to 1990, especially due to the opposition press, which vocalizes its criticism of the regime. Beginning in 1990, Cote d'Ivoire evolved, with relatively little violence or dislocation, from a single-party state. Opposition parties, independent newspapers, and independent trade unions were made legal at that time. Since those major changes occurred, the country's pace of political change had been slow, prior to the period of turmoil ushered in by the December 1999 coup.

Whether further democratic reform will take place, adequate to meet future challenges, is unknown. As is generally true in the region, the business environment is one in which personal contact and connections remain important, where rule of law does not prevail with assurance, and where the legislative and judicial branches of the government remain weak. The political system is becoming less centralized, with the president stepping out of his role as ruling
party leader, while attempting to decentralize many legislative functions. President Gbagbo has promised less executive interference in the judicial system, but it still lacks basic strength and independence.

Cote d'Ivoire has a high population growth rate, a high crime rate (particularly in Abidjan), a high incidence of AIDS, a multiplicity of tribes, sporadic student unrest, a differential rate of in-country development according to region, and a dichotomy of religion associated with region and tribe. These factors put stress on the political system and could become more of a problem if the government does not succeed in implementing the reforms enshrined in the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accord and if the economy does not return to consistent growth.

Political Parties
The Ivoirian constitution affords the legislature some independence, but it has not been widely exercised. Until 1990, all legislators were from the PDCI. The December 2000 National Assembly election was marred by violence, irregularities, and a very low participation rate. Largely because of the RDR boycott of the election to protest the invalidation of the candidacy of party president Alassane Ouattara, the participation rate was only 33%. In addition, the election could not take place in 26 electoral districts in the north because RDR activists disrupted polling places, burned ballots, and threatened the security of election officials. Following the legislative by-elections in January 2001, 223 of the 225 seats of the National Assembly were filled. The FPI held 96 seats, the PDCI 94 seats, the PIT 4 seats, very small parties 2 seats, independent candidates 22 seats, and the RDR—in spite of its boycott of the legislative elections—5 seats.

Until it took the reins of government in the 2000 elections, the FPI party was the oldest opposition party. Moderate in outlook, it has a socialist coloration but one which was more concerned with democratic reform than radical economic change. It is strongest in the Bete ethnic areas (southwest) of President Laurent Gbagbo. The PDCI's "core" region may be described as the terrain of the Baoule ethnic group in the country's center and east, home of both Houphouet-Boigny and Bedie; however, the PDCI is represented in all parts of Cote d'Ivoire. Former members of the PDCI's reformist wing formed the originally non-ideological RDR in September 1994. They hoped that former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara would run and prevail in the 1995 presidential election, but Ouattara was subsequently disqualified by Bedie-sponsored legislation requiring 5-year residency. The RDR is now strongest in the mostly Muslim north.

The FPI and RDR boycotted the presidential election of October 1995 because of Ouattara's disqualification and the absence of an independent electoral commission, among other grievances. Their "active boycott" produced a certain amount of violence and hundreds of arrests, with a number of those arrested not tried for 2-1/2 years. These grievances remained unresolved, adding to the political instability leading to the 1999 coup.

ECONOMY
The Ivoirian economy is largely market-based and depends heavily on the agricultural sector. Between 60% and 70% of the Ivoirian people are engaged in some form of agricultural activity. The economy performed poorly in the 1980s and early 1990s, and high population growth coupled with economic decline resulted in a steady fall in living standards. Gross national product per capita was $727 in 1996 but had fallen to $669 by 2003. (It was substantially higher two decades ago.) A majority of the population remains dependent on smallholder cash crop production. Principal exports are cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapples, tuna, and tropical woods. Principal U.S. exports are rice and wheat, plastic materials and resins, kraft paper, agricultural chemicals, telecommunications, and oil and gas equipment. Principal U.S. imports are cocoa and cocoa products, petroleum, rubber, and coffee.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics
Direct foreign investment plays a key role in the Ivoirian economy, accounting for between 40% and 45% of total capital in Ivoirian firms. France is overwhelmingly the most important foreign investor. In recent years, French investment has accounted for about one-quarter of the total capital in Ivoirian enterprises, and
between 55% and 60% of the total stock of foreign investment capital.

Infrastructure
By developing country standards, Cote d'Ivoire has an outstanding infrastructure. There is an excellent network of more than 8,000 miles of paved roads; good telecommunications services, including a public data communications network, cellular phones, and Internet access. There are two active ports. Abidjan is the most modern in West Africa and the largest between Casablanca and Cape Town on the West African littoral. Rail links from the port north into Burkina Faso are being upgraded. There is regular air service within the region and to and from Europe and modern real estate developments for commercial, industrial, retail, and residential use. Abidjan remains one of the most modern and livable cities in the region. Its school system is good by regional standards and includes an international school—whose enrollment dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent French-based schools.

Recent political and economic problems have delayed Cote d'Ivoire's planned public investment program. The government's public investment plan accords priority to investment in human capital, but it also will provide for significant spending on economic infrastructure needed to sustain growth. Continued infrastructure development has been brought into question because of private sector uncertainty. In the new environment of government disengagement from productive activities and in the wake of recent privatization, anticipated investments in the petroleum, electricity, water, and telecommunications sectors, and in part in the transportation sector, will be financed without any direct government intervention. A return to political and economic stability is critical if Cote d'Ivoire is to realize its potential in the region.

Major Trends and Outlooks
Since the colonial period, Cote d'Ivoire's economy has been based on the production and export of tropical products. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries account for more than one-third of GDP and two-thirds of exports. Cote d'Ivoire produces 40% of the world's cocoa crop and is a major exporter of bananas, coffee, cotton, palm oil, pineapples, rubber, tropical wood products, and tuna. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc and accompanying structural adjustment measures increased the international competitiveness of the agricultural, light industrial, and service sectors. However, reliance on raw cocoa and coffee exports, which account for 40% of total exports, exposes the economy to the ups and downs of international price swings. To reduce the economic exposure to price variability, the government encourages export diversification and intermediate processing of cocoa beans.

The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Cote d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until the slowdown evident by 1999. Increased aid flows, rigorous macroeconomic policies, and high international commodity prices, along with devaluation, yielded 6%-7% annual GDP growth rates from 1994-98. Cote d'Ivoire also benefited from Paris Club debt rescheduling in 1994, a London Club agreement in 1996, and the 1997 G-7 decision to include Cote d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for highly indebted poor countries.

With the economic improvement, Cote d'Ivoire began turning the corner on its daunting debt load. For several years running, it met its IMF targets for growth, inflation, government finance, and balance of payments. Government revenues increased, which in combination with spending restraint resulted in 3 years of primary surpluses (that is, receipts minus expenditure, excluding borrowing and debt service). Following a concerted government repayment effort, domestic arrears were virtually eliminated by the end of 1996. The pre-devaluation stagnation which caused local businesses and potential outside investors to delay capital expenditures accentuated the post-devaluation investment boom.

Lower inflation followed as the government kept a tight lid both on salary increases and on the size of the public sector work force devaluation and has continued with the economic slowdown of the last several years. The consumer price index measure of inflation slid from 13.6% in 1995 to 5.4% in 1997 and 0.7%
in 1999. Through the first three quarters of 2003, inflation was estimated at 3.0%, according to the Ivoirian Institute of Statistics.

In the past several years, economic decline has resulted in declining living standards. Falling commodity prices along with government corruption and fiscal mismanagement brought the economy to its knees by the end of 1999. At that point, the coup d'etat and the subsequent institution of the military junta government caused the loss of foreign assistance. Private foreign investment declined precipitously. Government internal and external debt ballooned. As a result, the Ivoirian economy contracted 2.3% in 2000. The government signed a Staff Monitoring Program with the IMF in July 2001, but plans for a subsequent Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility were disrupted by the onset of the crisis in September 2002. The signs of economic and business recovery were encouraging in the mid-year of 2002, but the political and social crisis that began in September 2002 undermined all the efforts to resume cooperation with international donors. The economy has been in a slow decline since the outbreak of the armed rebellion in late 2002, with a cutoff of most external assistance (except humanitarian aid), mounting domestic and foreign arrearages, and a drastic slowdown in foreign and domestic investment. Prospects for an economic rebound are currently not expected until after scheduled presidential elections in 2005.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES, MILITARY, AND GENDARME
Since the outbreak of the rebellion in September 2002 that split the country, the military has reorganized. The former system that broke down the country into five military regions no longer exists. The 20,000-man Ivoirian armed forces (FANCI) include an army, navy, air force, and gendarmerie. The Joint Staff is assigned to the FANCI headquarters in Abidjan. A two-star officer serves as the chief of staff and commander of the FANCI.

The gendarmerie is roughly equivalent in size to the army. It is a national police force which is responsible for territorial security, especially in rural areas. In times of national crisis the gendarmerie could be used to reinforce the army. The gendarmerie is commanded by a brigadier-general.

Cote d'Ivoire has a brown-water navy whose mission is coastal surveillance and security for the nation's 340-mile coastline. It has two fast-attack craft, two patrol crafts, and one light transport ship. It also has numerous smaller vessels used to control immigration and contraband within the lagoon system.

The Ivoirian Air Force's mission is to defend the nation's airspace and provide transportation support to the other services. Within its inventory are at least 5 Alpha jets, 12 transport/utility aircraft, and 2 helicopters, though additional aircraft were purchased following the September 2002 coup attempt/mutiny.

A mutual defense accord signed with France in 1961 provides for the stationing of French forces in Cote d'Ivoire. The 43rd Marine Infantry Battalion is based in Port Bouet adjacent to the Abidjan Airport. Shortly after the beginning of hostilities in September 2002, France established a stabilization force, currently approximately 4,000 troops, under "Operation Licorne." Previously, France had approximately 500 troops stationed in Cote d'Ivoire. In January 2003, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries—Senegal (commander), Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Niger—on the ground beside the French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line dividing the country. On April 4, 2004, ECOWAS troops became part of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) which was authorized under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1528. The authorized strength of the UNOCI operation is 7,090 personnel. UNOCI and Operation Licorne coordinate closely to fulfill the terms of UNSCR 1528 and subsequent resolutions. UNSCR 1609 of June 2005 extended the UNOCI and Licorne mandate until January 2006.

FOREIGN RELATIONS
Throughout the Cold War, Cote d'Ivoire's foreign policy was generally favorable
toward the West. The country became a member of the United Nations in 1960 and participates in most of its specialized agencies. It maintains a wide variety of diplomatic contacts. It sought change in South Africa through dialogue and was the first country accredited to post-apartheid South Africa. In 1986, Cote d'Ivoire announced the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

France remains Cote d'Ivoire's single most important foreign partner. President Houphouet-Boigny, who was a minister in the French Government prior to independence, insisted that the connection with France remain strong. Concrete examples of Franco-Ivoirian cooperation are numerous: French is Cote d'Ivoire's official language; Cote d'Ivoire adopted the French legal system; a French marine infantry brigade stationed in Abidjan augmented security; thousands of French expatriates continue to work and live in Cote d'Ivoire; and the CFA franc currency is tied to the euro. However, the September 2002 events injected strain into the relationship, as the Ivoirian Government criticized France for its perceived failure to uphold its commitment under the 1961 mutual defense treaty by helping government forces recapture rebel-held areas. However, the French did send additional forces--reaching a total of around 4,000 troops as of fall 2003--to secure the ceasefire line between regular government and rebel forces. The French contingent was joined by a force provided by various member states of ECOWAS that totaled over 3,000 as of fall 2003. Anti-French riots erupted in Abidjan in late January-early February 2003, but bilateral relations subsequently improved amidst ongoing French military and diplomatic efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis. In May 2004, Cote d'Ivoire joined the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CENSAD).

The Ivoirian Government has traditionally played a constructive role in Africa. President Houphouet-Boigny was active in the mediation of regional disputes, most notably in Liberia and Angola, and had considerable stature throughout the continent. In 1996-97 Cote d'Ivoire sent a medical unit to participate in regional peacekeeping in Liberia, its first peacekeeping effort. Cote d'Ivoire's hopes to expand its involvement in regional peacekeeping efforts were derailed by the December 1999 coup. Still a regional economic powerhouse, Cote d'Ivoire hopes to retake its place in promoting regional stability when the resolution of its current crisis permits.

Cote d'Ivoire belongs to the UN and most of its specialized agencies; the African Union; West African Economic and Monetary Union; ECOWAS; African Mauritian Common Organization; Council of Entente Communautaire Financiere Africaine; Non-aggression and Defense Agreement; Nonaligned Movement; African Regional Satellite Organization; InterAfrican Coffee Organizations; International Cocoa Organization; Alliance of Cocoa Producers; African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries; and Association of Coffee Producing Countries. Cote d'Ivoire also belongs to the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank; it is an associate member of the European Union.

**U.S.-IVOIRIAN RELATIONS**

U.S.-Ivoirian relations have traditionally been friendly and close. Some strain has resulted from the Section 508 restrictions on nonhumanitarian aid imposed on Cote d'Ivoire following the December 1999 coup. Because of Ivoirian governmental interference in the 2000 presidential elections, the Section 508 restrictions were not lifted. New elections are scheduled in 2005. The U.S. participates in the international effort to assist Cote d'Ivoire in overcoming its current crisis, providing assistance--totaling about $9 million as of fall 2003--to the ECOWAS contingent helping to maintain the ceasefire. The U.S. is sympathetic to Cote d'Ivoire's desire for rapid, orderly economic development as well as its moderate stance on international issues. Bilateral U.S. Agency for International Development funding, with the exception of self-help and democratization funds, has been phased out, although Cote d'Ivoire continues to benefit from regional West African programs. The country remains a major beneficiary of U.S. assistance in combating HIV/AIDS, as the Centers for Disease Control bases a large regional program in Abidjan.

The U.S. and Cote d'Ivoire maintain an active cultural exchange program, through which prominent Ivoirian Government officials, media representatives, educators,
and scholars visit the U.S. to become better acquainted with the American people and to exchange ideas and views with their American colleagues. This cooperative effort is furthered through frequent visits to Côte d'Ivoire by representatives of U.S. business and educational institutions, and by visits of Fulbright-Hays scholars and specialists in various fields. A new U.S. Embassy chancery compound opened in July 2005.

A modest security assistance program that provides professional training for Ivorian military officers in the U.S. has been suspended by the Section 508 restrictions.

**Principal U.S. Officials**

- Ambassador—Aubrey Hooks
- Deputy Chief of Mission—Vincent Valle
- Management Counselor—Robert Yamate
- Political/Economic Counselor—James Wojtasiewicz
- Economic Officer—Andrea Lewis
- Consular Affairs Officer—Peter Thompson
- Defense Attaché—COL Peter Aubrey
- Public Affairs Officer—David Andresen

The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Rue Jesse Owens, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (tel. 225. 20-21-09-79, fax. 20-22-23-59); mailing address is 01 B.P. 1712, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire.

**TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION**

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program provides Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, and Public Announcements. **Consular Information Sheets** exist for all countries and include information on entry requirements, currency regulations, health conditions, areas of instability, crime and security, political disturbances, and the addresses of the U.S. posts in the country. **Travel Warnings** are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. **Public Announcements** are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions overseas that pose significant risks to the security of American travelers. Free copies of this information are available by calling the Bureau of Consular Affairs at 202-647-5225 or via the fax-on-demand system: 202-647-3000. Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings also are available on the Consular Affairs Internet home page: [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Consular Affairs Tips for Travelers publication series, which contain information on obtaining passports and planning a safe trip abroad, are on the Internet and hard copies can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, telephone: 202-512-1800; fax 202-512-2250.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained from the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at (202) 647-5225. For after-hours emergencies, Sundays and holidays, call 202-647-4000.

The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) is the U.S. Department of State's single, centralized public contact center for U.S. passport information. Telephone: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778). Customer service representatives and operators for TDD/TTY are available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

Travelers can check the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at 877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747) and a web site at [http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm) give the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. A booklet entitled Health Information for International Travel (HHS publication number CDC-95-8280) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, tel. (202) 512-1800.

Information on travel conditions, visa requirements, currency and customs
regulations, legal holidays, and other items of interest to travelers also may be obtained before your departure from a country's embassy and/or consulates in the U.S. (for this country, see "Principal Government Officials" listing in this publication).

U.S. citizens who are long-term visitors or traveling in dangerous areas are encouraged to register their travel via the State Department’s travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov or at the Consular section of the U.S. embassy upon arrival in a country by filling out a short form and sending in a copy of their passports. This may help family members contact you in case of an emergency.

**Further Electronic Information**

**Department of State Web Site.** Available on the Internet at http://www.state.gov, the Department of State web site provides timely, global access to official U.S. foreign policy information, including Background Notes and daily press briefings along with the directory of key officers of Foreign Service posts and more.

**Export.gov** provides a portal to all export-related assistance and market information offered by the federal government and provides trade leads, free export counseling, help with the export process, and more.

**STAT-USA/Internet,** a service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, provides authoritative economic, business, and international trade information from the Federal government. The site includes current and historical trade-related releases, international market research, trade opportunities, and country analysis and provides access to the National Trade Data Bank.

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