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 (official exchange rate, 2007 est.): $18.66 billion.
GDP (purchasing power parity, 2007 est.): $32.86 billion.
Annual real growth rate (2007 est.): 1.7%. Real GDP grew by 1.8% in 2006 and rose by 1.7% in 2007.
Natural resources: Petroleum (offshore) discovered in 1977, production began in 1980; earnings from oil and refined products were $1.3 billion in 2006. Gold mining began in the early 1990s.
Agriculture (22.7% of GDP, 2006): Products--cocoa, coffee, timber, rubber, corn, rice, tropical foods.
Industry (26.3% of GDP, 2006): Types--food processing, textiles.
Services (51% of GDP, 2006).

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 10,000 French and possibly 60,000 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 Assinie 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 Agni, who occupied the southeast, and the Baoule, 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
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--disbanded 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 Ivorian 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 4,000 French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line, known as the Zone of Confidence, 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 UN peacekeepers (UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, or UNOCI) were in place to provide security for rebel New Forces ministers. On July 4, 2003, the government and New Forces militaries 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 Ivoirian Government claimed it was a mistake), French forces retaliated by destroying most of the small Ivoirian 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 Côte 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 2005, the government postponed presidential elections scheduled for October 30, 2005. In October 2005, the UN Security Council, via UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1633, endorsed an African Union decision to extend the Linas-Marcoussis peace process for an additional 12 months. As called for under 1633, a new Prime Minister, Charles Konan Banny, was selected by the international community and given broad powers designed to reunify the country. Banny selected a new cabinet in December 2005 in collaboration with the opposition, the President and the New Forces. Violent protests mounted by militias loyal to President Gbagbo in January 2006 against statements by UNOCI regarding the role of the National Assembly during the ongoing transition period threatened the independence of the Banny government and the ability of UNOCI and the International Working Group (created by the UN Security Council to oversee the peace process) to help the country achieve a stable, lasting reconciliation.

Initial steps toward disarmament and elections began in May 2006. The government began a pilot identification program for citizens and foreign residents lacking birth and nationality certificates. Government and rebel New Forces military formations began pre-groupment activities as a prelude to actual disarmament. Neither initiative was completed, and elections did not take place on October 31, 2006, as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1633. In November 2006, the UN Security Council issued a new resolution, 1721, which extended Prime Minister Banny's mandate for an additional 12 months. Prime Minister Banny was effectively blocked, however, from exercising control over the government as envisioned by the international community. President Gbagbo closed out 2006 with a speech to the nation in which he called for direct talks with the New Forces and the elimination of the Zone of Confidence.

Ouagadougou Political Agreement
On March 4, 2007, after weeks of closed-door negotiations led by Burkinabe President Compaore in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, President Gbagbo and New Forces leader Guillaume Soro announced they had agreed to a peace agreement aimed at reunifying the
country and holding new elections. The Ouagadougou Accord foresaw a new transitional government and the re-launch of the stalled voter registration and identification process to enable elections to be held within 10 months. It also called for the near-immediate elimination of the Zone of Confidence; the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants; and for ex-rebel and government forces to partially merge before the formation of a new army.

At the end of March, Soro was named Prime Minister, and several days later, a new cabinet--consisting of most of the ministers from the previous cabinet--was named. Since then, UNOCI has withdrawn from the Zone of Confidence and several mixed brigades of New Forces, national army soldiers, and impartial forces carry out joint patrols in its place. Government ministries (particularly Health, Education, Finance, and Interior) and officials are returning to their posts in the northern part of the country, as are important economic actors, such as banks and utilities. In September 2007, the first step in the identification of voters commenced when a series of mobile courts began issuing birth certificates to those who never had them. In April 2008, the government announced elections would be held on November 30, 2008. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants has begun on a limited, primarily symbolic scale. Both the government's armed forces and New Forces leadership no longer believe DDR will be completed before elections. An integrated command center has been created, but is not fully functioning and suffers from a lack of funding and direction.

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--Guillaume Soro
Foreign Minister--Yousouf Bakayoko
Ambassador to the U.S.--Yao Charles Koffi
Ambassador to the UN--Alcide Djedje

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

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