

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Côte d'Ivoire Briefing November 2017

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#### Côte d'Ivoire Summary 17 November 2017

*Tensions around parliamentary president and former Forces Nouvelles (FN) rebel leader Guillaume Soro build following his return to Abidjan. State prosecutor Christophe Richard Adou announces the arrest of Soro's chief of staff, Souleymane Kamaraté Koné (aka SoultoSoul), after the discovery of six tonnes of arms at Koné's residence in May. French state-owned media Radio France International (RFI) reports that a document from the Ivorian Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) (national security agency) was leaked on social media, which appears to show that the DST is aiming to put three of Soro's communications advisers under surveillance and withdraw their passports. International media report that Soro met President Alassane Dramane Ouattara (2011-present) towards the end of October and at the beginning of November.*

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#### Tensions build around Soro following return to Côte d'Ivoire

Tensions around parliamentary president and former **Forces Nouvelles (FN)** rebel leader **Guillaume Soro** have increased since his return to **Côte d'Ivoire** on 23 October after nine weeks abroad. The incidents are part of ongoing political power struggles following the discovery of an arms cache – described in the press as “dozens of crates of weapons and ammunition”<sup>1</sup> – at the residence of Soro's chief of staff, **Souleymane Kamaraté Koné** (aka **SoultoSoul**), in **Bouaké (Vallée du Bandama District)** in May (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire June 2017*). The ensuing government investigation has led to various allegations, ranging from an alleged witch-hunt against Soro by the prime minister, **Amadou Gon Coulibaly**, to exclude Soro from the presidential race in 2020, to Soro being the sole cause of insecurity in Côte d'Ivoire since the beginning of the year. Media reports and analysts have alleged that Soro was the instigator of a mutiny within the armed forces in January, where soldiers in a coordinated action took control of several cities across the country, blockading vital road arteries and taking control of police stations (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire January 2017*). At the time, sources said that the timing of the mutiny and Soro's re-election to parliamentary president in January were suspicious,

*“The coincidence between these events and the re-election of Soro to parliamentary president left many observers perplexed.”<sup>2</sup>*

So far, there is no conclusive evidence to tie Soro to the mutiny, although the later discovery of arms at Koné's residence could appear to support the initial allegation. Ivorian political analysts believe that the government's actions against Soro, and Soro's alleged actions in recent months, are far from benign,

*“Everyone knows what ties [Soro] to [Koné]. Koné is his most loyal supporter. They are hurting Soro where it hurts most. It's a strategy to scare him; a way of showing him that he could himself be arrested... I think that President **Alassane Dramane Ouattara's** (2011-present) **Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)** party wants to scare and even send Soro into exile*

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<sup>1</sup> Reuters, 8 Jun 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Source, social science professor and member of political bureau, Abidjan

*such that it's over for him. However, when you decrypt the events, Soro has thrown back the terror, showing that he is not afraid and will stop at nothing.”<sup>3</sup>*

State prosecutor **Christophe Richard Adou** announced Koné’s arrest on 9 October.<sup>4</sup> Adou said that police forces discovered over six tonnes of various arms at Koné’s residence on 16 May, including NPO Bazalt’s RPG-7 grenade launchers, 12.7cm x 108mm calibre heavy machine guns, AK47 assault rifles, and mortar bombs.<sup>5</sup> Adou said that possession of the weapons is a violation of the **United Nations (UN) inspired Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réintégration (DDR)** (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration) process, which the government initiated in 2011, and called for all bearers of arms to deliver them to the **Autorité pour le Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réintégration (ADDR)** (DDR authority).<sup>6</sup> Adou said that Koné’s intention was to “*destabilise the state*”.<sup>7</sup> Koné issued an open letter on the day after his incarceration, stating,

*“Today, because of my boss Soro, I am in prison. It is not me that they are after.”<sup>8</sup>*

The attendance of exclusively pro-Soro supporters upon Soro’s arrival at **Felix-Houphouët Boigny International Airport in Abidjan** highlights the emergence of several support groups, outside of traditional political parties, that have sprung up in recent years in support of a Soro presidential candidacy. These include the **Réseau des Amis de la Côte d’Ivoire (RACI)** (Côte d’Ivoire friend network), the **Amicale des Forces Nouvelles (AFN)** (FN association) and the **Union des Soroïstes (UDS)** (Soroist union).<sup>9</sup> Analysts believe Soro’s strategy is to diversify his support base, in order to weaken traditional political parties.<sup>10</sup> The **Conférence des Coordinations de la jeunesse Soro Guillaume (CCJSG)**, another pro-Soro group, protested outside the **Maison d’Arrêt et de Correction d’Abidjan (MACA)** (Abidjan detention and correctional facility) on 28 October to demand Koné’s release.<sup>11</sup> The CCJSG repeated their support for Koné:

*“[We] deem this arrest as unjust and political [and] reiterate once more our total support for [Koné] and demand that he be set free.”<sup>12</sup>*

Soro reportedly visited **Morocco, Luxembourg and Russia** as part of his extended trip abroad.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of his visit to Morocco was unclear, although he reportedly has a good relationship with Moroccan **King Mohammed VI** (1999-present).<sup>14</sup> Soro was in Russia for the 137<sup>th</sup> **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** assembly, while the purpose of his visit to Luxembourg was unclear.<sup>15</sup> **Opposition Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)** leader **Pascal Affi N’Guessan** said that Soro’s absence was “*worrying*”<sup>16</sup>, claiming that Soro may seek to visit former president and FPI leader **Laurent Gbagbo** (2000-2011), who remains on trial at the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** in **The Hague (Netherlands)**.<sup>17</sup> International investigative journalists confirmed rumours that Soro may have sought to meet Gbagbo.<sup>18</sup> However, it is unclear whether Soro visited The Netherlands. Reportedly,

<sup>3</sup> Source, political analyst, Abidjan

<sup>4</sup> *Fraternité Matin*, 10 Oct 2017.

<sup>5</sup> *Fraternité Matin*, 10 Oct 2017.

<sup>6</sup> *Fraternité Matin*, 10 Oct 2017.

<sup>7</sup> *Fraternité Matin*, 10 Oct 2017.

<sup>8</sup> AFP, 23 Oct 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *Afrique Sur 7*, 13 Nov 2017.

<sup>10</sup> *Jeune Afrique*, 13 Nov 2017.

<sup>11</sup> *L’Infodrome*, 29 Oct 2017.

<sup>12</sup> *L’Infodrome*, 29 Oct 2017.

<sup>13</sup> *Koaci*, 19 Oct 2017.

<sup>14</sup> *Jeune Afrique*, 13 Nov 2017.

<sup>15</sup> APA, 9 Oct 2017.

<sup>16</sup> APA, 14 Oct 2017.

<sup>17</sup> *L’Infodrome*, 13 Oct 2017.

<sup>18</sup> [La Lettre du Continent, 27 Sept 2017.](#)

the only means for Soro to do this would be through the submission of a formal request at the ICC registry.<sup>19</sup>

There are also reports in the international and local press that Soro is attempting to become closer to former president and leader of the ruling **Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP)** coalition member party, the **Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)**, **Henri Konan Bédié** (1993-1999).<sup>20</sup> The reports would suggest that Soro is attempting to strengthen ties with political heavyweights aside from Ouattara. Soro appears to be distancing himself from the RDR. Soro missed the party's congress in August (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire August 2017*) although he is an RDR member of parliament (MP) for **Ferkessédougou (Tchologo Region)** since 2011.

### **...and French media unveils alleged plot to put several Soro allies under surveillance**

After Soro's return to Côte d'Ivoire, **French** state-owned media **Radio France International (RFI)** reported that a document from the **Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST)** (national security agency) had been leaked on social media, that apparently shows that the DST is aiming to put three of Soro's communications advisers under surveillance and have their passports retracted.<sup>21</sup> ARC was unable to access the document, and apart from RFI, no local media sources appear to have reported independently on the story. RFI claims the letter was dated 13 October, and targeted Touré (see above); **Félicien Sekongo**, former AFN member and communications adviser; and **Affoussiata Bamba-Lamine**, former spokesperson for the FN and communications minister under the government of vice-president **Daniel Kablan Duncan**, who was prime minister from 2012 to January 2017.<sup>22</sup> Bamba-Lamine's response to the RFI's report appeared ambiguous:

*"We are in the realm of supposition. I cannot respond in the place of those that are in charge of the dossier. As you know, this dossier is secret, and therefore I cannot speak about it. I will seek an answer before the interior ministry to understand why a document that implicates me is being circulated. Obviously, I will do this for all those concerned by the document... I do not make a link [regarding the apparent tension between Soro and Ouattara], but you could ask yourself the question."<sup>23</sup>*

Bamba-Lamine continued to claim that the authorities had long-standing knowledge that Koné had these arms at his residence,

*"Why is it only today that we discover these arms? I ask myself the question and I think everyone asks themselves the same question... If these arms were found at [Koné's] residence, it means that these arms entered Côte d'Ivoire with the authorisation of the authorities. The other question that I would ask myself is that in 2012 [Koné's] residence was known as a location that sheltered these arms. Everyone knew it. Why is it today that we are told that we have discovered six tonnes of arms at someone's residence who is not authorised to hold these weapons?"<sup>24</sup>*

The supporters of Ouattara's presidential election victory during the 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis, such as the UN, the **European Union (EU)** and France, had reportedly allowed for the acquisition of arms in order to assure a takeover from Gbagbo.<sup>25</sup> After Ouattara secured victory, Soro, in the presence of all of the **Forces Armées de Côte d'Ivoire's (FACI)** (armed forces) top generals, submitted a full inventory of arms under his control.<sup>26</sup>

Communication between Soro and Ouattara has reportedly become tense due to the recent allegations made against Koné. During Soro's recent absence from Côte d'Ivoire, Soro and Ouattara reportedly

<sup>19</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 27 Sept 2017.

<sup>20</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 25 Oct 2017.

<sup>21</sup> RFI, 26 Oct 2017.

<sup>22</sup> RFI, 26 Oct 2017.

<sup>23</sup> RFI, 26 Oct 2017.

<sup>24</sup> RFI, 26 Oct 2017.

<sup>25</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 11 Oct 2017.

<sup>26</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 11 Oct 2017

communicated through proxies.<sup>27</sup> Ouattara had reportedly sought to employ the help of former **Nigerian** president **Olusegun Obasanjo** (1999-2007), to act as a mediator between the two.<sup>28</sup> According to media reports, Soro and Ouattara had not communicated from June until they met in Abidjan on 27 October.<sup>29</sup> According to other media reports from 15 November, Soro also met with Ouattara on 3 November, and reportedly told people close to him that he was “*extremely satisfied*”<sup>30</sup> with the talks, claiming that all misunderstandings had been resolved.<sup>31</sup>

The recent developments in the case against Koné, as well as the DST’s reported surveillance of Soro’s allies, support the reports of a significant increase in tension between Ouattara’s and Soro’s respective camps. Political tension is palpable as a result of the highly publicised nature of recent events. It is difficult to determine the government’s and Soro’s true motives; however, the dominant hypotheses continue to be either a Ouattara-led witch hunt against Soro, or an attempt by Soro to destabilise the country in recent months through his alleged influence in the military and security forces, as well as his alleged possession of arms. The reality of the current political and security climate is likely somewhere between the two explanations. It is important to note that both Ouattara and Soro continually promote peace and dialogue in public speeches. Nevertheless, at this time the political outcome is difficult to predict.

### Planner

22 Apr 2018 (**Côte d’Ivoire**) *Abidjan.net*. The **World Cocoa Conference** begins in **Berlin (Germany)**;

17 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. **Salon International de l’Agriculture et des Ressources Animales** (agriculture and animal resources conference) begins;

29 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. The **EU-Africa Summit** begins;

### Chronology

13 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *APA*. Former **United Kingdom** prime minister **Tony Blair** meets with President **Alassane Ouattara**;

13 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *TelQuel*. Vice President **Daniel Kablan Duncan** confirms that the \$450m **Cocody Bay** rehabilitation project, which **Morocco** state-owned **Marchica Med** is conducting, is 70% complete;

9 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. The **African Development Bank** approves €253m (\$295m) in funding for state-owned airline **Air Côte d’Ivoire SA**, to support an increase in regional flights to **Luanda (Angola)**, **Bangui (CAR)** and **Nouakchott (Mauritania)**;

7 Nov 2017 (**Côte d’Ivoire**) *Press Release*. President **Alassane Ouattara** signs a \$524.7m five-year compact agreement with the **Millennium Challenge Corp** in **Washington D.C. (United States)**, to aid economic growth and reduce poverty;

3 Nov 2017 **Soubré (Côte d’Ivoire)** *AIP*. President **Alassane Ouattara** inaugurates the 275MW **Soubré** hydro power plant,

3 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Alassane Ouattara** and

<sup>27</sup> Jeune Afrique, 21 Sept 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Jeune Afrique, 21 Sept 2017.

<sup>29</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 30 Oct 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Jeune Afrique, 15 Nov 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Jeune Afrique, 15 Nov 2017.

parliamentary president **Guillaume Soro** reportedly meet at the presidency, the first time since the arrest of Soro's chief of staff, **Souleymane Kamaraté Koné**;

2 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *NewsWire*. Canada-based **Endeavour Mining Corp** and **United Kingdom**-based **Randgold Resources Ltd** sign a joint venture covering their respective **Sissédougou** and **Mankono** exploration areas;

1 Nov 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Jeune Afrique*. President **Alassane Ouattara** and ruling coalition **PDCI** party leader and former President **Henri Konan Bédié** meet in Abidjan, amid tensions between their respective parties' members ahead of the 2020 presidential election;

29 Oct 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *La Tribune*. Prime minister **Amadou Gon Coulibaly** announces the launch of a FCFA 475 billion (\$844m) infrastructure rehabilitation programme in the Abidjan;

27 Oct 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *La Tribune*. The **Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire** (territorial surveillance agency) reportedly places three people close to parliamentary president **Guillaume Soro** under surveillance, including the immediate retraction of their passports;

27 Oct 2017 **(Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea)** *RFI*. President **Alassane Ouattara** begins a state visit to Guinea;

23 Oct 2017 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *BBC*. Parliamentary president **Guillaume Soro** returns to Côte d'Ivoire after two months abroad;

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

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