

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Côte d'Ivoire Briefing July 2017

#### Côte d'Ivoire Summary 26 July 2017

*President Alassane Dramane Ouattara (2011-present) reshuffles his cabinet, including key ministries and the presidency. Members of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), part of the Rassemblement Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP) coalition, claim the reshuffle is a clear message that the coalition is all but dissolved. Attacks on military and police bases in and near the capital Abidjan, as well as Korhogo (Savanes District), create climate of tension in the lead-up to launch of the 8th Jeux de la Francophonie (Francophonie games). The United Nations (UN) ends its peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), on 30 June, after 13 years in Côte d'Ivoire.*

#### Ouattara announces cabinet reshuffle

President **Alassane Dramane Ouattara** (2011-present) reshuffled his cabinet on 19 July, involving key ministries and the presidency.<sup>1</sup> The reshuffle increases responsibilities for certain ministers and appears to castigate others. The new appointments are:<sup>2</sup>

- **Amadou Gon Coulibaly**, prime minister and budget minister (budget portfolio added to responsibilities);
- **Hamed Bakayoko**, state minister for defence (formerly interior minister);
- **Sidiki Diakité**, interior minister (until his appointment as prefect of the **Département d'Abidjan**<sup>3</sup>);
- **Alain Richard Donwahi**, water and forestry minister (formerly defence minister at presidency);
- **Pascal Abinan Kouakou**, administrative modernisation minister (formerly included the civil service portfolio);
- **General Issa Coulibaly**, civil service minister (formerly managing director of the **Douanes de Côte d'Ivoire** (Ivorian customs authority));
- **Abdourahmane Cissé**, special adviser at the presidency (formerly budget minister).

The most notable feature of the reshuffle is Donwahi's relegation from defence to water and forestry. The demotion is surprising given the significant political and economic influence of the Donwahi family. Alain Donwahi is the son of **Charles Bauza Donwahi**, the late former agriculture minister under **Félix Houphouët-Boigny** (1960-1993), whose family continues to hold the reputation as one of few elite families that were part of the former president's inner circle.<sup>4</sup> Charles Donwahi was also MP for **Soubre (Bas-Sassandra District)** and president of the **Assemblée Nationale** (lower chamber of parliament).<sup>5</sup> Alain Donwahi therefore benefits from a privileged position within Houphouët's **Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI)**, despite a predominantly non-political career until recently.<sup>6</sup> Charles Donwahi was head of the **Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO) SA** in the 1970s, the then **French** conglomerate that **Japan-based Toyota Tsusho Corp** now owns.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.presidence.ci](http://www.presidence.ci)

<sup>2</sup> [www.presidence.ci](http://www.presidence.ci)

<sup>3</sup> Sub-regional government administrative level

<sup>4</sup> Jeune Afrique, 31 May 2016.

<sup>5</sup> [www.abidjan.net](http://www.abidjan.net)

<sup>6</sup> [www.abidjan.net](http://www.abidjan.net)

<sup>7</sup> Jeune Afrique, 31 May 2016.

Alain Donwahi's sister, **Illa Ginette Donwahi**, is head of family agricultural firm **Donwahi Plantations**.<sup>8</sup> Alain Donwahi leveraged his father's network to become a member of the **Grand Loge de Côte d'Ivoire (GLCI)** (Ivorian freemasons branch).<sup>9</sup> As regional councillor of **Nawa Region** (Bas-Sassandra District) Alain Donwahi holds sway over regional government structures' decision-making, in a politically influential region – Nawa is Côte d'Ivoire's third most populated region.<sup>10</sup> Donwahi retains influence in both security and military circles, as the former secretary of the **Conseil National de Sécurité (CNS)** (national security council).<sup>11</sup> Donwahi remains close to General **Lassina Doumbia**, head of the **Forces Spéciales de l'Armée** (special forces), whom Donwahi reportedly consulted regularly during security incidents.<sup>12</sup> Donwahi reportedly met with Doumbia concerning security incidents ahead of Ouattara.<sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether Ouattara perceived this as lack of respect for the chain of command.

Alain Donwahi's demotion may be related to his management of the recent mutinies and demobilised rebel protests (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire May 2017*), which have tarnished **Côte d'Ivoire's** reputation as a safe investment destination. Alternatively, his demotion may be politically related, as the **Rassemblement Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RHDP)** coalition<sup>14</sup> appears to be splitting ahead of the 2020 presidential elections (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire April 2017*). Alain Donwahi's family ties to the PDCI, as well as his sister's ties to President **Laurent Gbagbo** (2000-2011)<sup>15</sup> of the **Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)**, could suggest that Donwahi's exit may be politically motivated. Like Gbagbo, the Donwahi family is of **Bété** ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> The placing of RDR members in higher-level cabinet roles appears to be increasing since Coulibaly's appointment as prime minister in January (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire January 2017*). In December, Ouattara had already ousted minor RHDP coalition members, then foreign minister **Albert Mabri Toikeusse** of the **Union pour la Démocratie et pour la Paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI)** and **Gnamien Konan** of the **Union pour la Côte d'Ivoire (UPCI)**, in a sign that the RHDP had begun to fracture following legislative elections (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire December 2016*). The consequent division of parliamentary blocs in April consolidate the view of many analysts that the RHDP will not outlive the 2020 presidential elections, and may even disintegrate before the presidential election campaign.<sup>17</sup> The RDR's newly found dominance in parliamentary decision-making, with 50.6% of votes<sup>18</sup>, could relegate the PDCI to the role of a minority party since the RDR no longer needs the PDCI's support to pass legislation.<sup>19</sup> A PDCI source says Ouattara's reshuffle sends a clear message,

*"By ousting ministers close to the PDCI, Ouattara is showing his colours. He is always in the race for 2020; the only way to get there is through a political rupture between the RDR and the PDCI from now onwards. The different security troubles have only served as a pretext to get rid of [former president] **Henri Konan Bédié's**<sup>20</sup> (1993-1999) key ministerial posts, such as the defence portfolio. Donwahi as water and forestry minister really is a consolation. Behind all this is a will to break apart from the PDCI and take full control of key ministries."<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> Multiple sources: Jeune Afrique, 31 May 2016; LinkedIn, 24 Jul 2017.

<sup>9</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 4 Jan 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Multiple sources: INS, 2014 Census; www.abidjan.net.

<sup>11</sup> www.abidjan.net

<sup>12</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 1 Mar 2017.

<sup>13</sup> La Lettre du Continent, 1 Mar 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Composed of Ouattara's **Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)**, the PDCI, and several other minor parties.

<sup>15</sup> Jeune Afrique, 31 May 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Source, journalist, Abidjan

<sup>17</sup> Source, journalist, Abidjan

<sup>18</sup> www.assnat.ci

<sup>19</sup> www.assnat.ci

<sup>20</sup> President of the PDCI

<sup>21</sup> Source, PDCI member, Abidjan

Ouattara has simultaneously rewarded Coulibaly, Bakayoko and Cissé with increased responsibility; all are either loyal members of the RDR (Coulibaly and Bakayoko) or support the party's cause (Cissé). As one source says,

*"The political situation in Côte d'Ivoire forces the president to rely on solid frames, loyal men. Coulibaly is one of his unshakeable supporters – he has complete trust in him... The prime minister is the man of the moment."*<sup>22</sup>

There is evidence that Coulibaly, Bakayoko and Cissé are positioning themselves for the RDR presidential candidacy.<sup>23</sup> All three are widely considered Ouattara's protégés and front-runners to succeed him as future RDR presidential candidates, amid rumours of Ouattara's poor health.<sup>24</sup> Cissé has reportedly recently helped organise RDR political campaigns in the capital, **Abidjan**, wearing party colours for the occasion.<sup>25</sup> Bakayoko is president of the GLCI (see above), which indicates his ascendancy and connections in business circles in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>26</sup> His influence on the media outlets through the newspaper he founded, **Le Patriote**, and radio station **Radio Nostalgie**, is well documented.<sup>27</sup> These three individuals now comprise Ouattara's inner circle, which has an increasingly RDR bent.

*"Three men make up power today – Bakayoko, Coulibaly and Ouattara – and around them are the men that the president considers his inner circle, with people such as Cissé."*<sup>28</sup>

The reshuffle appears to have sparked tension within the ruling RHDP coalition. It appears that Ouattara is slowly forcing the PDCI out of the coalition. The RDR's legislative power and public support means the party can contemplate ruling without the PDCI, which would allow Ouattara to bypass concessions such as key ministerial positions and compromises on policy. The PDCI's response may take a more aggressive form in the lead-up to the 2020 presidential elections, as it seeks to cling to power. Fulfilment of the deal struck between Bédié and Ouattara ahead of the 2015 election to have a PDCI candidate for the 2020 elections now appears unlikely.

### Flare-ups at military and police bases increase ahead of Francophonie games

Flare-ups at military and police bases ahead of the launch of the 8<sup>th</sup> **Jeux de la Francophonie** (Francophonie games) in Abidjan on 21 July have given rise to fresh security concerns in light of mutinies and demobilised rebel movements in recent months (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire May 2017*). Gunmen attacked military bases in the **Abobo** neighbourhood of Abidjan (**Abidjan District**), and in **Korhogo** (**Savanes District**), on 15 July.<sup>29</sup> Although soldiers thwarted the attacks, killing the three unidentified assailants in Korhogo, the military in Abobo identified neither the group nor the motive behind the attack.<sup>30</sup> Military sources claimed that the attackers were among the demobilised rebels who had protested throughout Côte d'Ivoire in May.<sup>31</sup> Several hundred demobilised former rebels had blocked access to the southern entry of **Bouaké** (**Vallée du Bandama District**) in May, making bonus payment claims that dated back to 2007 and totalled FCFA 18m (\$30,516) per person.<sup>32</sup> On that occasion, the demobilised rebels' demands were secondary to a more forceful demand from mutineers within the armed forces, which raised concerns about the possibility of future demobilised rebel violence (see *ARC Briefing Côte d'Ivoire May 2017*). So far, the **Cellule 39** demobilised rebel organisation has not claimed responsibility for the attacks.

<sup>22</sup> Source, RDR supporter, Abidjan

<sup>23</sup> Source, political analyst, Abidjan

<sup>24</sup> Source, journalist, Abidjan

<sup>25</sup> Jeune Afrique, 13 Jan 2016.

<sup>26</sup> www.connectionivoirienne.ci

<sup>27</sup> Le Point, 19 Jul 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Source, political observer, Abidjan

<sup>29</sup> Connection Ivoirienne, 15 Jul 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Reuters, 15 Jul 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Reuters, 15 Jul 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Connection Ivoirienne, 8 May 2017.

Less than a week later, on 20 July, a day before the launch of the Jeux de la Francophonie, gunmen attacked the **Ecole de Police's** (national police academy) **Centre de Coordination des Décisions Operationnelles (CCDO)** (special forces unit) and stole weapons.<sup>33</sup> The attack occurred just a few hours after the appointment of Bakayoko to the defence ministry (see above).<sup>34</sup> The perpetrators of the attack were unidentified.<sup>35</sup> After the first attack on CCDO facilities, press sources heard gunfire near the **Yopougon** neighbourhood's CCDO unit, as Bakayoko confirmed that a second attack had taken place at the Yopougon CCDO unit with weapons stolen from the facilities.<sup>36</sup> During the night of 21-22 July, unidentified gunmen attacked an elite police base in **Azaguié**, 40 kilometres north of Abidjan, reportedly aiming to steal weapons, although the assailants on this occasion were unsuccessful.<sup>37</sup> The gunmen did, however, kill one person.<sup>38</sup> Some of the arms stolen from the CCDO and police units reportedly included rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, ammunition and communications equipment.<sup>39</sup>

The security forces made arrests in the following days in relation to the attack on the CCDO units, detaining five people, of whom three were soldiers.<sup>40</sup> **Youssef Kouyate**, director general of the **Police Nationale** (national police), said that the arrests included the "*principal actors*".<sup>41</sup> Diakité (see above) later hinted that there may be a link between the detained group and the attack on Azaguié, claiming that "*all of the stolen arms were recovered*."<sup>42</sup> Despite the flare-up, Diakité assured that the conditions for the Francophonie games were safe,

*"We receive foreigners, whom we must be able to reassure... All of the sites are secured... I can tell you that at that level we have no worry."*<sup>43</sup>

Government spokesperson, **Bruno Nabagné Koné**, said on 26 July that the detained suspects "*began to talk*".<sup>44</sup> Koné said that the attackers were planning a larger attack,

*"We can imagine that these people were not solely going to shoot in the air but were preparing larger attacks."*<sup>45</sup>

According to sources within the police forces, the attackers acted alone, possibly explaining why there was no further claim of responsibility,

*"The attacks in Korhogo and Abidjan in principle look like isolated acts, independent attacks. This is my point of view. I don't think that is it demobilised rebels, part of the [Cellule 39] organisation, that carried out these attacks. The individuals could have belonged to that group, but these attacks were about maintaining pressure on the government, to show that the government does not have control over security."*<sup>46</sup>

Other sources doubt that the attackers came from within the army,

*"Why would military officers, that are not part of the 8,400 mutineers, attack military bases, with such rudimentary means? It's a hypothesis that does not hold water. You know that when we speak of rebels, demobilised or even mutineers, there is what we in Abidjan call dormant cells*

<sup>33</sup> RFI, 20 Jul 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Reuters, 20 Jul 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Reuters, 20 Jul 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Reuters, 20 Jul 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Reuters, 22 Jul 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Reuters, 22 Jul 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Reuters, 22 Jul 2017.

<sup>40</sup> RFI, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Reuters, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Multiple sources: Jeune Afrique, 26 Jul 2017; Reuters, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>43</sup> RFI, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Jeune Afrique, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Jeune Afrique, 26 Jul 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Source, high-ranking police officer, Abidjan

*which carry out attacks like this with precise objectives: weakening the security climate. The timing is perfect.”<sup>47</sup>*

Other sources believe the events could have a political dimension, following the cabinet reshuffle,

*“We cannot predict the exacerbation or not of violence in Côte d’Ivoire... In form, these attacks resemble terrorist attacks... But it is important to observe the political context of these attacks.”<sup>48</sup>*

The possibility of a political dimension to the attacks on military and police bases is troubling, if related to the cabinet reshuffle. The security situation in Côte d’Ivoire remains in the balance and tensions may increase ahead of the 2020 elections.

### UN ends peacekeeping mission

The **United Nations (UN)** ended its peacekeeping mission, the **United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI)**, on 30 June, after 13 years in-country.<sup>49</sup> UNOCI began operating in Côte d’Ivoire in 2004, at the height of the first Ivoirian civil war (also known as the politico-military *crise*, or crisis).<sup>50</sup> UNOCI sent over 9,000 troops in 2010 ahead of the presidential election but failed to prevent the ensuing post-electoral crisis.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, UNOCI validated the poll results to declare Ouattara the winner in 2011.<sup>52</sup> Reportedly, the decision to leave Côte d’Ivoire is related to the **United States’ (US)** decrease in funding for UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>53</sup>

Bakayoko called the UNOCI mission “*a true success*”:<sup>54</sup>

*“The government supports the UNOCI’s retreat because this shows the world that Côte d’Ivoire is now a stable country, that the crisis is far away. The security index rating of the country is favourable to investment. The presence of UN forces in the country is not a sign of stability. So yes, the UN’s exit was appreciated.”<sup>55</sup>*

However, according to an ARC source, the UNOCI’s presence has not made much difference to recent tensions,

*“The UNOCI presence would have changed little to the security context in Côte d’Ivoire. The UN’s special representative had even said that mutinies in January were not a threat... Anyway, it’s not the UN who should maintain peace but the state.”<sup>56</sup>*

The end of the UNOCI mission appears to have little impact on the government’s ability to thwart minor security threats. The recent tensions, although significant, are internal (in the military) and therefore it would have been almost impossible for the UNOCI peacekeepers to intervene. In the long run, the UNOCI’s exit is likely to have a positive impact on the government’s self-defence capabilities.

<sup>47</sup> Source, journalist, Abidjan

<sup>48</sup> Source, journalist, Abidjan

<sup>49</sup> Reuters, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>50</sup> www.un.org

<sup>51</sup> Reuters, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Reuters, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>53</sup> France 24, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>54</sup> France 24, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>55</sup> France 24, 30 Jun 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Source, political observer, Abidjan

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

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Please contact us by email [info@africariskconsulting.com](mailto:info@africariskconsulting.com) or call + 44 (0) 20 7078 4080

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