

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Côte d'Ivoire Monthly Briefing January 2025

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#### Côte d'Ivoire Summary 23 January 2025

*The ruling Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP) continues its efforts to advance the candidacy of President Alassane Ouattara (2010-present) for the October presidential elections, while Ouattara himself is beginning to suggest that he is at the very least considering running again. France and Côte d'Ivoire agree that French troops will withdraw from their base in Abidjan in January. Police arrest Burkinabè national, Alain Christophe Traoré, on suspicion he was engaging in efforts to destabilise Côte d'Ivoire. The government grants five small companies exploration licences for strategic minerals in the north, centre and northeast of the country.*

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#### Ouattara hints at possible fourth term but party has not made a definitive decision

President **Alassane Ouattara** (2010-present) told diplomats on 9 January that he was “*in good form*” and wanted to continue serving his country, giving his least unambiguous indication yet that he plans to run for office again<sup>1</sup> During his earlier **New Year**'s address to the nation, he had carefully skirted the issue, calling only for peaceful, transparent and democratic elections.<sup>2</sup>

His party, the **Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP)**, has been relentlessly pushing their leader's candidacy, claiming that Ouattara is only in the second mandate of the Third Republic (2016-present).<sup>3</sup> The Second Republic (2000-2016) ended after the adoption of a new constitution that was submitted by popular referendum in October 2016. The RHDP argues that even though Ouattara was elected in 2010, this was during the Second Republic, and he has only served one term under the new Third Republic which allows him to stand for another term.

Against this background, the presidential palace has seen the return of former prime minister **Patrick Achi** as special advisor.<sup>4</sup> Achi was regularly in the palace until October 2023 to fulfil his role as prime minister, to which he had been appointed in March 2021. At the time, he was considered as a potential successor to the head of state but his re-appearance as a special advisor is reportedly due to his proximity to **La Mé Region** and the hopes that Achi could nudge wards voting for Ouattara.

Other, similar special advisor nominations through the course of 2024 point at a broader presidential strategy.<sup>5</sup> Ouattara is looking for a solution that will maintain stability and economic growth in the country, preserve - at least for the time being - party unity and provide himself with an off-ramp so that once his re-election is secured, he can hand over to a successor who will run in the 2030 election. This successor is very likely to come from the special advisors that he has appointed over the past 12 months. Achi is the most obvious candidate, as he does not carry excess political baggage and is sufficiently experienced and able to convince the country to rally behind him.

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<sup>1</sup> Guineematin, 9 Jan 2025

<sup>2</sup> Soir Info, 2 Jan 2025

<sup>3</sup> Le Matin, 28 Dec 2024

<sup>4</sup> Le Jour, 8 Jan 2025

<sup>5</sup> Le Jour, 8 Jan 2025

## Côte d'Ivoire and France agree on withdrawal of French contingent in Abidjan

Ouattara used his televised New Year address to announce that the **French** military camp next to the **Félix Houphouët Boigny International Airport** will be given back to the Ivorian army in January.<sup>6</sup> Ouattara noted:

*"...we have decided [in favour of] a concerted and organised withdrawal of the French forces in Côte d'Ivoire. And so, the camp of the 43<sup>rd</sup> BIMA (Bataillon d'infanterie de marine) at Port-Bouët will be handed over to the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, starting. January 2025."*<sup>7</sup>

**Forces Armées de Cote d'Ivoire (FACI)** (Ivorian armed forces) chief of staff General **Lassina Doumbia** on 13 January called the handover "a decisive step in our quest for strategic autonomy" and announced that the French base will be home to, among others, the first battalion and paratroopers and the military academy for information and communication systems.<sup>8</sup> Doumbia, who made his remarks during the annual army presentation of New Year vows to the president, demanded of his officers present to "ensure the preservation of peace, the security of the elections by the October 2025 deadline and do so with professionalism and dedication."<sup>9</sup> The general's remarks imply that the army considers itself answerable to political leadership and has no intention to engineer any unconstitutional change of power.

Outtara confirmed in his New Year address that military expenditure is about 4% of GDP, on par with the other top spenders in the region, **Togo** and **Burkina Faso**, but above the regional average of 3%. It is warranted by a security threat still present in the north, as insecurity and volatility because of widespread terrorism, continue to grow in neighbouring **Mali** and **Burkina Faso**. Côte d'Ivoire has also not been untouched by terrorism - on 13 March 2016, terrorists attacked **Grand Bassam**, near **Abidjan**, killing 22. There has also been various incursions into the north between 2020 and 2021, which have since subsided.

The handover of the base at Port Bouët does not mark the definitive end of French involvement in Côte d'Ivoire's defence efforts but this will be oriented towards regional security.<sup>10</sup> The coastal town of **Jacqueville**, also near Abidjan, hosts an anti-terrorism academy - the **Académie internationale de lutte contre le terrorisme** - in which the French play a very significant role, along with the **European Union** and some of its other member states, in terms of theoretical and in-field training.<sup>11</sup>

## Police arrest Burkinabè national accused of destabilising Côte d'Ivoire

Police arrested Burkinabè national and social media influencer **Alain Christophe Traoré**, also known as **Alino Faso**, in the second week of January on suspicion of engaging in efforts to destabilise Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the military junta in Burkina Faso.

The arrest of Faso, reported to be "a supporter of" or "close to" the junta, was not made public until 15 January, when he had already been in custody for five days.<sup>12</sup> It was government spokesman **Amadou Coulibaly** who ended speculation about Faso's whereabouts:

*"I don't want to enter into sensationalism. Nobody has disappeared in Côte d'Ivoire. I can confirm to you that Mr Alain Traoré has been apprehended, a procedure is ongoing. He has been arrested in accordance with the rules. As we speak, a procedure is ongoing."*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Soir Info, 2 Jan 2025

<sup>7</sup> Soir Info, 2 Jan 2025

<sup>8</sup> APA News, 13 Jan 2025

<sup>9</sup> APA News, 13 Jan 2025

<sup>10</sup> Koaci.com, 8 Jan 2025

<sup>11</sup> Academy website, ailct.org

<sup>12</sup> VOA, 15 Jan 2025

<sup>13</sup> VOA, 15 Jan 2025

Coulibaly added that once the procedure had run its course, the national public prosecutor would be inform the general public.<sup>14</sup> Coulibaly did not give reasons for Faso's detention but an informal source told the French press agency **AFP** that he was part of a group of online influencers considered very close to the military regime of Burkina Faso's junta leader Captain **Ibrahim Traoré** (no relation) and the group engaged in sustained campaigns of pro-junta propaganda and severe harassment against critics of the junta in Burkina Faso.<sup>15</sup> Local media confirmed that Faso was, in fact, detained by the Ivorian intelligence service, as it investigates pro-junta networks that are hostile to the Ivorian authorities.<sup>16</sup> There has been no reaction from the junta.<sup>17</sup>

Relations between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso are at their lowest ebb since the 2010-2011 Ivorian civil war, when the north of the country was under the control of rebel forces who were widely suspected to have received support from Burkina Faso. Since the end of the civil war, relations have improved until Traoré's coup d'état on 30 September 2022. Traoré has launched repeated evidence-free accusations of destabilisation against Côte d'Ivoire and local media has suggested that in tandem with a disinformation cell inside Côte d'Ivoire, the Traoré regime stands accused of fomenting its own destabilisation efforts.<sup>18</sup>

### Government grants five new exploration permits

At a ministerial meeting held on 15 January, the government granted exploration permits to five mining companies. Most of the permits cover gold prospecting but there are other minerals involved that the government considers strategic, namely nickel, rare earth, cobalt and chrome.<sup>19</sup> The companies - **Ivoire Gold**, **Mako Côte d'Ivoire**, **La Société pour le Développement des Investissements en Afrique-Côte d'Ivoire SA**, **Viroque minerals** and **Canada**-headquartered **Goldridge Resources** - all appear to be juniors and/or small local outfits that may be prospecting for larger companies. All have up to four years to establish whether they have discovered quantities of any of these minerals, during which time the mines, oil and energy ministry will be overseeing the prospecting activities, and coordinate with other relevant ministries, particularly environment, budget and finance.<sup>20</sup>

The permits cover geographical area such as **Tanda (Gontougo Region)** in the northeast, where earlier prospecting has yielded results, especially in the north, near **Ferkessédougou (Tchologo Region)**, **Koutiala (Mali)** and **Kong (Tchologo)**, but the centre, close to **Bouaké (Gbêkê Region)** and near **Bouaflé (Marahoué Region)** in particular.<sup>21</sup>

The granting of new permits is part of the government's stated policy to diversify the economy and give more prominence to the extractive industries.<sup>22</sup> Together with a steadily improved investment climate, which has seen FDI rise from \$300m in 2012 to \$1.3 billion in 2023, the extractive sector has seen not only new discoveries of oil and minerals but also significant increases in production. Gold production increased from 12 tonnes in 2012 to 65 tonnes in 2023, making Côte d'Ivoire an important, though not yet a major, gold producer in the West African region.<sup>23</sup>

### Planner

27 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** Financial Afrik Awards

May 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** African CEO Forum

<sup>14</sup> L'Infodrome, 15 Jan 2025; lefaso.net, 15 Jan 2025

<sup>15</sup> Le Monde, 16 Jan 2025

<sup>16</sup> Le Monde, 16 Jan 2025

<sup>17</sup> lefaso.net, 15 Jan 2025

<sup>18</sup> L'infodrome.com, 18 January 2025

<sup>19</sup> Sika Finance, 18 Jan 2025

<sup>20</sup> Sika Finance, 18 Jan 2025

<sup>21</sup> Sika Finance, 18 Jan 2025

<sup>22</sup> Revue de géopolitique, 5 Dec 2024

<sup>23</sup> Afrique-sur7.fr, 19 Jan 2025

Oct 2025 (Côte d'Ivoire) Presidential elections

2025 (Côte d'Ivoire) African Development Bank (AfDB) annual meetings

### Chronology

20 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. Farmers reported scarce rainfall across most of Côte d'Ivoire's main cocoa-growing regions last week, emphasising the need for more rain to support the April-to-September mid-crop;

20 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Agence Ecofin*. Agriculture minister **Kobenan Kouassi Adjoumani** says cashew nut production is expected to reach 1.15 million tonnes in 2025, a 20% increase compared to 2024, with the purchase price per kilogramme set at 425 FCFA (\$0.66);

15 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Abidjan.net*. Government spokesperson **Amadou Coulibaly** says oil and gas production from the **Baleine** field will exceed initial forecasts, with oil production expected to be between 50,000 and 60,000 barrels per day against a forecast of 35,000 while gas production forecast to be between 50 and 60 million cubic feet per day against an initial forecast of 40 million;

15 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. The army orders the suspension of five officials tasked with combatting cocoa smuggling in **Sipilou (Tonkpi Region)** due to suspicions that they are involved in trafficking;

12 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. The Ivorian ports of **Abidjan** and **San Pedro** are expected to play a central role in the export of lithium from Mali's recently inaugurated **Goulamina** mine;

9 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *TimesLive*. President **Alassane Ouattara** said he would like to continue serving his country as president but emphasised that his party had not yet made a formal decision on its candidate for this year's election

3 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Reuters*. Cocoa exporters estimate that 50,000 metric tonnes of cocoa were smuggled from Côte d'Ivoire to **Guinea** between October and December 2024

1 Jan 2025 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Financial Times*. President **Alassane Ouattara** announces that **French** soldiers will withdraw from the country in January

31 Dec 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Bloomberg*. Cocoa finishes 2024 as the top-performing major commodity, its massive annual gain driven by supply fears and market volatility

20 Dec 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. **International Development Association (IDA)**, a **World Bank** subsidiary, approves a €285.9m (\$297.3m) loan to support Côte d'Ivoire's investment programme aimed at consolidating the foundations of economic growth in the country

19 Dec 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *APA News*. **African Development Bank (AfDB)** approves loans totalling \$145.15m to support youth employment and entrepreneurship, targeting key sectors with high job creation potential

18 Dec 2024 **Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)** *Sika Finance*. Construction begins on the **Kone** gold mine, the largest in Côte d'Ivoire, owned by **Canada**-headquartered **Montage Gold**

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