

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Various government structures continue efforts to informally campaign for the candidacy of junta leader General Mamadi Doumbouya (2021-present) in the yet to be scheduled presidential elections. The Singapore-based Winning International Group on 19 January takes delivery of a transshipment barge, which will play a key role in the evacuation of iron ore from Guinea. Dubai-based Emirates Global Aluminium's Guinea subsidiary is temporarily laying off half its workforce in an ongoing dispute with the military junta over the construction of an alumina refinery. The kidnapping and alleged torture of a very high-profile civil rights activist indicates that the junta is ramping up its repression of dissent.

A Doumbouya presidential candidacy takes shape

Government structures across the country are multiplying manifestation of support for the presidential candidacy of junta leader General **Mamadi Doumbouya** (2021-present). In a concerted campaign, national ministries, local authorities and support committees for the ruling junta, **Comité national de du rassemblement pour le développement (CNRD)**, are organising events in support of a Doumbouya candidacy. The most recent of these took place in **Kindia (Kindia Region)**, the de facto capital of Basse Guinée, where economy and finance minister **Mourana Soumah** was on hand to praise the accomplishments of the CNRD and proclaim that a Doumbouya candidacy would be for the benefit of the nation.¹ Like the junta leader himself, but in spite of scepticism expressed both nationally and internationally, the minister put the **Simandou** iron ore project and its expected revenues and the projects supposedly emerging from those proceeds at the centre of junta and government policy.²

At the same rally, junta spokesperson General **Amara Camara** removed virtually all doubt regarding the candidacy of Doumbouya, even though this runs counter to the CNRD's own transition charter, which explicitly forbids anyone within the transitional structures and institutions to run for office.³ Camara told the rally:

*"Your exceptional mobilisation is the clearest sign of your adhesion to the society-wide project that we are constructing together under the leadership of president Mamadi Doumbouya."*⁴

Earlier in February, a similar rally was held in Doumbouya's place of birth, **Kan Kan (Kankan Region)**, during which Camara and various ministers explained to the people gathered for the occasion that the current transitional head of state is the only viable candidate who can bring unity and development to the country.

There is still no timetable for any election and the government spokesman, **Ousmane Gaoual Diallo** said late January that any poll would be impossible "*for logistical reasons*", in contradiction to what he had told the **French** international broadcaster **Radio France Internationale (RFI)** only a few weeks earlier, when he announced that presidential elections would certainly be held in the course of 2025.⁵

Work on the Simandou related infrastructure continues

¹ Guineematin.com, 22 Feb 2025

² Guineematin.com, 22 Feb 2025

³ RFI, 3 Feb 2025

⁴ Ledjely.com, 22 Feb 2025

⁵ RFI, 3 Feb 2025

The **Singapore**-based **Winning International Group** on 19 January took delivery, in **China**, of a transshipment barge that it named **Winning Simandou 1**, which Winning International's vice president **Sun Siyuan** called "*a key element in our maritime fleet dedicated to Simandou.*"⁶ Detailed information on the 110-meter **Tuvalu**-registered barge states that its function is to take in ore on a quay, in this case at the future iron ore port under construction at **Morébaya** (Kindia), before it is towed to the open sea where it will release the ore into ocean-going vessels anchored offshore.⁷

Winning currently exports bauxite from its operations in the **Boké Region** out of a riverside port and tows into the open sea, rather than building a deep sea port and letting ships dock directly there. The jailed opposition politician **Aliou Bah** has described the extensive environmental damage this model causes in Boké, but from Winning's plans, it seems it will nevertheless continue this export model. The company says that a deep-sea port is envisaged but only in what it terms "*the second phase.*"⁸

Other infrastructure work is also continuing, as the two consortiums exploiting Simandou, **Winning Simandou Consortium**, led by **China's Baowu Steel**, and **Simfer**, led by **Australia's Rio Tinto**, announced in quick succession that they had placed orders for locomotives worth \$250m each from the **United States (US)** firm **Wabtec** and that delivery of the engines would commence this year.⁹ At the **Africa Mining Indaba**, held in **Cape Town (South Africa)** between 9 and 12 February, representatives of the government and the two consortiums highlighted the amount of progress made in the construction of the **Trans Guinean Railway**, as well as the port facility necessary to get the ore out.¹⁰ Three key government figures at the Mining Indaba, mines and geology minister **Bouna Sylla**, **Simandou Strategic Commission** president **Djiba Diakité** and grand projects administrator **Ibrahim Abé Diallo**, all gave presentations to this effect.

Diallo confirmed that the first ore was going to be exported out of Guinea by the end of the year, following the tight time-table set by Doumbouya.¹¹ Sylla predicted that in the 2027, combined exports from both consortiums would be at 120 million tonnes.¹²

Guinea Alumina Corporation temporarily lays off half its workforce

The clash between **Emirates**-based **Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC)**, a subsidiary of **Emirates Global Aluminium**, and the junta has reached a decisive phase. The junta forced GAC's bauxite exports through the port of **Kamsar** to cease in October 2024 and GAC halted its mining operations in November 2024. Two of its sub-contractors, **Guinéenne de Prestation et de Construction** and **DTP**, part of the **France**-headquartered **Bouygues** conglomerate, have consequently terminated their contracts with GAC. Starting 1 February, GAC is temporarily laying off half of its 3,200-strong workforce for an initial period of four months, during which GAC will continue to pay 60% of the salaries of those temporarily out of work. However, trade unions have declared their unhappiness about the maintenance of far more expensive expatriates.¹³

The origin of the dispute is GAC's failure, in the eyes of the junta, to construct an alumina refinery and have it operational. GAC, in a variety of its iterations, has been promising this since it obtained a mining concession from a previous government in 2001 and entered a contractual arrangement to build a refinery in 2004.¹⁴ Doumbouya has been insisting on the construction of refineries since May 2022, a point of view reinforced by Sylla in January:

⁶ Guineenews, 19 Jan 2025; Guineematin, 21 Jan 2025

⁷ Bairdmaritime.com, 7 Feb 2025

⁸ Winning Consortium Simandou website: Description du Projet (wcsglobal.com)

⁹ Miningweekly.com, 29. Jan 2025; Wabtech Press release, 28 Jan 2025

¹⁰ Guineenews, 7 Feb 2025

¹¹ Guineemining.info, 8 Feb 2025; Agence Ecofin, 6 Feb 2025

¹² Agence Ecofin, 6 Feb 2025

¹³ Le Lynx, 31 Jan 2025

¹⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report Guinea, 2005/Q2.

“The last timetable agreed with GAC was that the construction of the refinery would be finished by September 2026. Until this point in time, construction has not even begun.”¹⁵

GAC exports an estimated 14 million tonnes of bauxite annually to its refinery and smelting facilities in **Dubai**.¹⁶ Some observers suggest that the junta’s concentration on GAC is due to its perception of the Emirati company having been very close to former president **Alpha Condé** (2010-2021), whom it deposed.¹⁷ But the junta’s frustration could also have been provoked by the numerous non-fulfilled promises to have a refinery up and running, while the company enjoys favourable fiscal and customs arrangements dating back to the Condé years.¹⁸ GAC has said it is in talks with the government to arrive at a solution to the issue.¹⁹

Civil rights activist’s kidnap and torture indicates junta’s willingness repress dissent

Abdoul Sacko, the national coordinator of the **Forum des forces sociales de Guinée** and described as ‘an eminent leader’ of a broad civil society coalition committed to returning Guinea to civilian rule was forcibly taken from his home in the capital Conakry before dawn on 19 February. Sacko’s wife reported that the abductors were men wearing balaclavas, some dressed in military uniforms, who entered the house and took Sacko away. Sacko’s lawyers confirmed later that day that Sacko was found abandoned and in critical condition, in the **Forécariah** prefecture, about 100km to the southeast of the capital:

“We, representatives of the national coordinator of the Forum of Social Forces, inform the national and international opinion that our client was found, severely wounded, tortured and left for dead by his abductors.”²⁰

Sacko was taken to a hospital for observation and treatment and is being held in a safe place until there is a medical report of his condition.²¹ His lawyers have demanded a meeting with the national public prosecutor, for a judicial inquiry to begin and a case to be brought against his kidnapers.²²

The abduction of Sacko comes seven months after the disappearance of two pro-democracy activists, **Oumar Sylla** (known countrywide as **Fonikè Mengué**) and **Mamadou Billo Bah**, and two months after the abduction of investigative journalist **Habib Marouane Camara** from his car. Camara was on his way to interview **Kerfala Person Camara**, who built the **N’zérékoré** stadium where on 1 December 2024 an estimated 150 people died in violence connected to a football match organised in honour of Doumbouya (see *ARC Briefing Guinea Dec 2024*).²³ None of these abductees have been heard from since but the case of Sacko suggests a change, and arguably an escalation, in terms of the methods the military junta wishes to employ to ensure no individual or organisation stands in the way of Doumbouya’s ambition to be Guinea’s next president. Local media noted:

“Sacko is a symbol. His case shows the extent to which some are prepared to go in order to silence the opposition.”²⁴

Planner

Jan - Mar 2025 (**Guinea**) Decree expected to fix the date for the constitutional referendum

TBC (**Guinea**) Constitutional referendum expected

TBC (**Guinea**) Presidential elections

¹⁵ Le Lynx, 31 Jan 2025

¹⁶ Karakannews.com, 29 Jan 2029

¹⁷ Karakannews.com, 29 Jan 2029

¹⁸ Conakryinfos.com, 28 Oct 2024

¹⁹ Le Lynx, 31 Jan 2025

²⁰ notreafrik.com, 21 Feb 2025

²¹ RFI, 21 Feb 2025

²² notreafrik.com, 21 Feb 2025; L’Infodrome, 21 Feb 2025

²³ Human Rights watch, 20 Feb 2025

²⁴ L’Infodrome, 21 Feb 2025

2025 Conakry (Guinea) Start of exploitation at the **Simandou** iron ore project

Chronology

24 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africaguinee*. Foreign affairs minister **Morissanda Kouyaté** says the constitution, which is yet to go to referendum, is ready but does not detail when it will be made public;

20 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Energy minister **Aboubacar Camara** reports that the government spends \$300m on the current electricity subsidy;

17 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Crypto News*. **El Salvador**-headquartered blockchain platform **Tether** signs a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Guinea's government to explore blockchain and peer-to-peer technology adoption

14 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guinee News*. Mining and government representatives renew the collective agreement for mines, quarries, mining and related industries, introducing several advances including improved retirement conditions, increased leave and the establishment of a salary scale

13 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Planning and international cooperation minister **Ismaël Nabé** attends the **World Government Summit** in **Dubai** and discusses development projects with **Emirati** authorities

12 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Guinea's anti-corruption court **Cour de répression des infractions économiques et financières (CRIEF)** finds former finance minister **Mamadi Camara** guilty of embezzlement of public funds, money laundering, corruption and illicit enrichment amounting to over 80 billion GNF (\$9.23m)

5 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Semafor*. Mines and geology minister **Bouna Sylla** says 5% of revenues from the **Simandou** iron ore project will be reinvested in the country's education system;

4 Feb 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Miningmx*. Mines and geology minister **Bouna Sylla** says that Guinea expects the **Simandou** iron ore project to reach full production of 60 million tonnes in the second year of operation

27 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Mining Review*. **Canada**-headquartered **Sanu Gold** secures \$13m from strategic investments for its drilling campaign at its **Daina** permit

25 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. The former ruling **Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée Arc-en-Ciel (RPG Arc-en-ciel)** says it will not replace former president **Alpha Condé** as its leader

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