

American Embassy's National Daily Press Review

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APRIL 20, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. Interior Minister speaks on reconciliation, political dialogue and security issues
2. Judicial reform underway in Cote d'Ivoire
3. ICC investigations into post-election violence in Cote d'Ivoire
4. UN peacekeeping chief speaks on the security situation in Cote d'Ivoire
5. Speculation on U.S.-Cote d'Ivoire relations

1. Interior Minister speaks on reconciliation, political dialogue and home security issues

"I want to ban racketeering among the police," vowed Interior Minister Hamed Bakayoko who is quoted by ***Le Patriote (p. 1)***. According to the paper the minister stated this yesterday in Abidjan during a guest speaker program organized by GEPCI, Cote d'Ivoire's news publishers' network. The minister also told the press that "300 fake police officers have been identified" in the national police. Regarding the case of Rodrigue Djedje, a lawyer of the former first lady, who was reported to be held in custody at MACA, a prison in Abidjan, the minister said: "Simone's lawyer is implicated in arms trafficking." Speaking about the former Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo and his FPI party, the minister said: "The FPI is holding Gbagbo hostage." Bakayoko also accused Justin Kone Katina, a former budget minister under Gbagbo's administration, of "looting the BCEAO," the West African States Central Bank during the political crisis in Cote d'Ivoire.

On the government's reconciliation process, ***Fraternite Main (p. 4)*** quotes the interior minister as saying that "the attempt to use the release of Gbagbo as a precondition for any dialogue will not help progress." According to Bakayoko, President Alassane Ouattara's pledge to reconcile Ivorians is "sincere" adding that "the liberation of the former president does not depend on me or on the President of the Republic." "We're calling on all those who fled the country," Bakayoko is also quoted as telling Ivorians who are still living outside the country.

But a front-page headline in **Notre Voie** describes the interior minister's statements as "shocking." The newspaper (**p. 5**) further notes that the minister was not able to convince the audience when it comes to issues such as "the role of the DST", a state intelligence unit, in the country's security apparatus, and the "invading presence" of the Dozos, traditional hunters. "Hamed Bakayoko admits dysfunction within the DST," says a prominent headline in **Le Courrier d'Abidjan (p. 1)**.

2. Judicial reform underway in Cote d'Ivoire

A report in **Le Patriote (p. 11)** says that Ivorian judicial experts meeting in Abidjan have validated a document containing recommendations for a reform of Cote d'Ivoire's judiciary system. The document, the paper says, seeks among other things to modernize the system and to find ways to build popular confidence in the system.

3. ICC investigations into post-election violence in Cote d'Ivoire

A report in **L'Inter (p. 3)** claims that President Ouattara has stopped the further transfer to the International Criminal Court (ICC) of anybody allegedly accused in connection with crimes committed during the recent post-electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire. "President Ouattara wants Cote d'Ivoire to recover its full judiciary independence," the paper quotes French newspaper Jeune Afrique as saying. The article also suggests that the president made his position known to the ICC's deputy prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, during her recent visit to Cote d'Ivoire.

4. UN peacekeeping chief speaks on the security situation in Cote d'Ivoire

On the security situation in Cote d'Ivoire, **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (p. 2)** quotes the head of United Nations peacekeeping, Herve Ladsous as saying that "the porous border" between Cote d'Ivoire and its neighbors remains the major challenge facing the country. According to the paper, the head of United Nations peacekeeping said this in an interview with French international broadcaster RFI at the end of his visit to Cote d'Ivoire.

In another development, a report in **Nord-Sud Quotidien (p. 3)** suggests that the UN Security Council will decide on Tuesday whether an arms embargo imposed on Cote d'Ivoire should be lifted or not. The article quotes U.S. Ambassador to the Security Council Susan Rice as saying that "The Security Council supports the remarkable progress made in Cote d'Ivoire under the stewardship of President Alassane Ouattara." The article further says that "the Security Council has however underscored some challenges including violations of the arms embargo and diamond trafficking."

5. Speculation on U.S.-Cote d'Ivoire relations

With pictures of President Obama and Ouattara on its front page, **Le Nouveau Courrier** claims that relations between the United States and Cote d'Ivoire are "strained." "United States-Ouattara: There is water in the gas," says a banner headline in this paper which suggests that (**p. 3**) the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the DST, a state intelligence unit, are the principal reasons of the "discord."

APRIL 19, 2012

Today's Top Stories

- 1.FPI opposition party calls for the delay of government-opposition dialogue
- 2.Lawyer of the former first lady incarcerated
- 3.Former rebel chief questioned about war crimes and crimes against humanity
- 4.Plans to reform the security sector in Cote d'Ivoire underway
- 5.U.S Embassy and partners launch HIV/AIDS hotline

1. FPI opposition party calls for the delay of government-opposition dialogue

A prominent headline in ***Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 1)** says that the former ruling FPI party is pushing for the delay of the government-opposition dialogue tentatively scheduled for April 27-28, 2012 in the southern city of Grand-Bassam. According to the paper, this was revealed by sources yesterday after a meeting between Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio and the party's executives in Abidjan. The paper (**p. 2**) also quotes insiders as saying that the party of former president Laurent Gbagbo would prefer "direct dialogue" with the government instead of a discussion that would include other opposition parties. The article also cites "division" within the ranks of the former ruling party over its rapport with the current regime.

"Government-opposition political dialogue: FPI asks for a delay," reads a headline in ***Notre Voie* (p. 2)**. According to the paper, the former ruling party has, in a letter to the Prime Minister, asked that the dialogue be postponed. The paper quotes the letter to provide one reason for the requested delay - the date of the government-opposition dialogue conflicts with the party's congress scheduled for April 29, 2012. "A postponement would enable the party to participate efficiently in the dialogue," the paper further quotes the letter as saying.

2. Lawyer of the former first lady incarcerated

A report in ***Soir Info* (p. 6)** says that Rodrigue Djedje, a lawyer of the former first lady, has been charged with "a breach of state security" and is being held in custody at MACA, a prison in Abidjan. The report also says that the lawyer was arrested by the DST, a state intelligence unit, on March 29, 2012 at the Abidjan international airport. The article also indicates that Djedje was the lawyer of the former first lady in the case regarding the disappearance of Guy-Andre Kieffer, a Franco-Canadian who disappeared in Cote d'Ivoire in April 2004.

Regarding the fate of the missing journalist, ***Soir Info* (p. 4)** quotes President Alassane Ouattara as saying, "Nobody will be protected." According to the paper, the president was speaking Tuesday in Abidjan when Kieffer's wife called on him. Kieffer's wife and the French organization, Reporters Without Borders, also asked the Ivorian authorities "to put in place a special commission of inquiry or a unit that will cooperate with French investigators on the case."

3. Former rebel chief questioned by ICC about war crimes and crimes against humanity

A prominent headline in **Notre Voie (p. 1)** suggests that a former warlord has been interrogated by a team of International Criminal Court investigators over allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to the paper **(p. 2)** former rebel leader Fofie Kouakou, who was promoted by President Ouattara to the position of regimental commander in the northern city Korhogo, was questioned over crimes allegedly committed during the period of September 2002 until May 2011.

4. Plans to reform the security sector in Cote d'Ivoire underway

A report in **Nord-Sud Quotidien (p. 5)** says that an army reform committee met yesterday in Abidjan under the chairmanship of the Minister in charge of Defense, Paul Koffi Koffi. According to the paper, the panel is tasked with coming up with strategies aimed at reforming the security sector in Cote d'Ivoire and proceeding with the disarmament, disbandment and the reintegration of the former fighters. In a related development, a report on the same page of the paper says that the decision whether to lift the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council on Cote d'Ivoire will be the dominant issue during the next meeting of the council.

With more on security issues, **state broadcaster RTI** yesterday carried footage of Ambassador Phillip Carter III, the minister in charge of defense and other military experts, attending a workshop on security reform in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the report the workshop was jointly organized by the U.S. Embassy and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. The report also said that Ambassador Carter used the occasion to reiterate the USG's commitment to support reforms underway in Cote d'Ivoire.

Meanwhile, a prominent story in **Le Patriote (p. 1)** quotes President Ouattara who is said to have given 90 days to government forces to restore security throughout the country.

5. U.S Embassy and partners launch HIV/AIDS hotline

A report in **Le Jour Plus (p. 7)** says that the Ministry of Health has launched an HIV/AIDS hotline to enable the public - especially the youth - to get information about the disease. The report also says that the project was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and other partners.

APRIL 18, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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- 1.The reconciliation process and government-opposition dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire
- 2.Reports say Ivorian authorities reinforce security on Cote d'Ivoire-Liberia border ahead of President Ouattara's visit to the region
- 3.President Ouattara and ECOWAS envoy discuss the situation in Guinea-Bissau
- 4.Consumers' association says moves to reduce price of food commodities have failed
- 5.New revelations as the trial of former heads of cocoa and coffee bodies is underway
- 6.U.S. Embassy trains librarians

1. The reconciliation process and government-opposition dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire

A report in *Fraternite Matin (p. 6)* says that a group of opposition parties have called for the release of officials close to the former regime detained in connection with the recent post-election crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. According to the paper, the League of the Movements for Progress (LMP) made the call yesterday during a meeting with the Chairman of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Charles Konan Banny, in Abidjan. The return of the Ivorian refugees and a demand to unfreeze assets of supporters of the former regime were also high on the agenda, reports the paper. However, the paper quotes LMP spokesperson Gervais Coulibaly as saying that these demands "should not be seen as pre-conditions," but rather as "preoccupations" that should be settled. "We hope that these demands will be settled progressively to enable our cadres to be present so that we can all together build our country," Coulibaly is reported as saying.

Reporting on the meeting between the head of the reconciliation commission and the delegation of the opposition parties, *Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 4)* quotes the opposition spokesperson as saying that "the reconciliation process is an advantage for all of us." Meanwhile, a prominent headline in *Le Patriote (p. 1)* claims that the former ruling FPI party has rejected the government's offer of national dialogue. Still on the same page, the paper quotes the spokesperson of the RDR, the party of President Alassane Ouattara, as saying, "The FPI should stop seeing itself as a victim." According to the paper, the spokesperson was reacting to the party's demand for the release of the former president Laurent Gbagbo and other supporters of the party as "pre-conditions" for any dialogue with the current government.

Regarding the role of the media in the ongoing reconciliation process, *L'Inter (p. 3)* quotes the head of Cote d'Ivoire's community radio association, Bamba Karamoko, who has pledged to use the radios as a tool to ensuring reconciliation, social cohesion and peaceful co-existence among Ivoirians.

2. Reports say Ivorian authorities reinforce security on Cote d'Ivoire-Liberia border ahead of President Ouattara's visit to the region

According to a prominent headline in **Le Patriote (p. 1)**, Ivorian authorities have beefed up security along the Ivorian-Liberian border ahead of President Ouattara's tour in the western region. The report also claims that French troops and government forces have been deployed in the area. Meanwhile, **Notre Voie (p. 1)** carries a prominent headline forecasting that President Ouattara's trip scheduled for April 21-24, 2012, the first to the troubled western region since he assumed power, would fail.

3. President Ouattara and ECOWAS envoy discuss the situation in Guinea-Bissau

A report in **Fraternite Matin (p. 5)** quotes the Chairman of the ECOWAS Commission, Kadre Ouedraogo, as saying that the military junta that seized power a few days ago in Guinea-Bissau "has agreed to return the country to the constitutional order." According to the paper, Ouedraogo stated this after a meeting yesterday with President Ouattara who is also the chairman of the West African regional block. The report also says that the head of the ECOWAS commission was in Abidjan to brief President Ouattara after talks with the leader of the junta. "ECOWAS is ready to send troops to Guinea-Bissau," says a headline in **Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 3)** quoting Ouedraogo.

4. Consumers' association says moves to reduce price of food commodities have failed

A front-page story in **Soir Info (p. 1)** quotes the head of the consumers association as saying that moves by the Ivorian authorities to reduce price of food commodities have "failed". "We can testify that there was no price reduction in the shops," Marius Comoe is reported as saying. Meanwhile, a front-page headline in **Le Patriote** quotes the Minister of Commerce Dagobert Banzio who vowed that the government "will force traders to reduce the price of food commodities."

5. New revelations as the trial of former heads of cocoa and coffee bodies is underway

"From prison where they were detained, the former heads of cocoa and coffee bodies were emptying their bank accounts," says a front-page headline in **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan**. Reporting on the same issue, **L'Inter (p. 1)** also quotes a witness who told the court hearing the case that the bank accounts of the former detainees have never been frozen. The paper (**p. 11**) carries a comment suggesting the announcement by the previous government in Cote d'Ivoire of the freezing of the bank accounts of the former heads of cocoa and coffee bodies, charged with embezzlement, was "pure comedy."

6. U.S. Embassy trains librarians

A report in **Fraternite Matin (p. 8)** says librarians from across the country attended a capacity-building workshop organized by the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan. Organized under the topic, "How to Handle an Information Resources Center," the training offered the participants the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge on methodologies and library management techniques.

APRIL 17, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. Security issues high on the agenda as UN peacekeeping chief meets with Ivorian authorities
2. Ivorian opposition party sets conditions for dialogue with government
3. Wife of missing journalist in Abidjan to mark 8th anniversary of disappearance
4. PEPFAR-supported social center opens in Tiassale

1. Security issues high on the agenda as UN peacekeeping chief meets with Ivorian authorities

A report in *Fraternite Matin* (p. 5) says that security on the Ivorian-Liberian border was high on the agenda when the head of United Nations peacekeeping, Herve Ladsous, met yesterday with Ivorian Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio. The article explains that the meeting came before the upcoming UN Security Council's meeting on Cote d'Ivoire. "There is still insecurity," the paper quotes Ladsous as telling reporters after the meeting. The UN peacekeeping chief, who is in Cote d'Ivoire as part of a tour in the West African region reportedly said: "UNOCI is working relentlessly in an innovative way with the UN Mission in Liberia and the security forces of both countries to improve the security situation along the porous border."

"Cote d'Ivoire has made remarkable progress in terms of democracy," *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 4) quotes the head of United Nations peacekeeping as saying. The paper (p. 1) also quotes the UN diplomat saying that the acquisition by Cote d'Ivoire of military jets was "part of military equipment that has been acquired in the framework of the cooperation between the UN mission in Liberia and the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire... It was deemed necessary to have these three helicopters stationed in Cote d'Ivoire in case there are any problems."

In a related development, a prominent headline in *Le Nouveau Courrier* (p. 1) suggests that President Ouattara's regime seems to be preparing "for war". To justify this assertion, the paper alleges that for some weeks now heavy arms and troops have been deployed at key points across the country with the backing of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

With more security issues, a front-page story in *Nord-Sud Quotidien* quotes Malian intelligence services as saying that the Touareg rebels operating in Mali "have moved close to Cote d'Ivoire."

2. Ivorian opposition party sets conditions for dialogue with government

"Our primary demand is the release of Gbagbo," *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 4) quotes a leading member of the former ruling FPI party as saying. According to the paper (p. 4) Alphonse Douati was speaking yesterday at a press conference in Abidjan, where he condemned the conditions under which leaders of the former regime were arrested and detained.

Reporting on the same event, *Nord-Sud Quotidien* (p. 4) indicates though the former ruling FPI party has accepted the offer to dialogue with the government, the party has yet to forego its demands that include the release of all the party leaders who have been incarcerated in connection with the recent post-election crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. "We're going to this dialogue to demand the release of Gbagbo and comrades," *Le Patriote* (p. 5) quotes Douati as saying. "Will the FPI seize the olive branch?" asks the paper casting doubt about the FPI's participation in the coming dialogue.

4. Wife of missing journalist in Abidjan to mark 8th anniversary of disappearance

A front-page headline in *Fraternite Matin* quotes the wife of the missing Franco-Canadian journalist, Guy-Andre Kieffer, calling on Ivorian authorities "to act instead of talking" in order to help trace the whereabouts of her husband. The report says that April 16, 2012 marks the eighth anniversary of Kieffer's disappearance in Abidjan. According to the report the wife of the missing journalist, Osange Kieffer will be meeting with Ivorian authorities regarding the case of her husband.

5. PEPFAR-supported social center opens in Tiassale

A report in *Fraternite Matin* (p. 8) says that the Ivorian authorities have opened in Tiassale, north of Abidjan, a center designed to provide care for the vulnerable population of this area. Worth FCFA 34 million (about US \$68000), the center has been financed by the USG through its PEPFAR program.



APRIL 16, 2012

Today's Top Stories

1. Government-opposition dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire
2. President Ouattara's maiden visit to western Cote d'Ivoire
3. Detention conditions of supporters of the former regime

1. Government-opposition dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire

According to a front-page story in *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan*, an inter-Ivorian dialogue designed to bring together government officials and opposition leaders is scheduled for April 27 to April 28, 2012 in the southern city of Grand-Bassam. The paper also indicates that six opposition parties, including the FPI of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo and Lider, a party recently created by the former speaker of the National Assembly, Mamadou Koulibaly, are invited to take part in this meeting.

The upcoming inter-Ivorian dialogue is also the subject of a front-page headline in *Soir Info* which suggests (p. 3) that the former ruling FPI party has expressed some "doubts" about the decision by the government to extend this dialogue to other parties. The paper further quotes party officials who

have questioned “the sincerity” of the government to engage in this dialogue. FPI leaders have also reportedly expressed fear that their principle demands including the release of their leader, former president Laurent Gbagbo and other cadres of the party, who have been detained following the post-election crisis, may not be taken into account.

An article in **Notre Voie (p. 3)** also casts doubts upon the upcoming inter-Ivorian dialogue with a headline reading, “Is Ahoussou trying to marginalize the true opposition?” The article further suggests that this meeting called by Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio could serve as a “pretext” for the government not to have “direct discussion” with the FPI, the principal opposition party.

Meanwhile, a report in **Fraternite Matin (p. 6)** says that the executive committee of the FPI has encouraged the party’s leaders to engage in “dialogue” with the government on the reconciliation process underway in Cote d’Ivoire. According to the paper, the committee made this recommendation at a meeting over the weekend. Reporting on the same meeting, **Le Nouveau Reveil** carries a front-page headline suggesting that the former ruling party is demanding the “recomposition” of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a pre-condition to join the national reconciliation process.

2. President Ouattara’s maiden visit to western Cote d’Ivoire

A report in **L’Inter (p. 4)** says that with six days to go for President Ouattara’s visit to western Cote d’Ivoire, the army has deployed heavy artillery in order to monitor security in the region. The article also suggests that government forces will be backed by UN peacekeepers and La Licorne, French troops stationed in Cote d’Ivoire; which, the report says, have started patrols in the region especially along the Liberia border.

Explaining the rationale behind the president’s maiden visit to the west, **Le Patriote (p. 3)** portrays western Cote d’Ivoire as the most devastated region in the country during the past decade, and suggests that during his trip, the president will try to reassure the different ethnic communities living in this area and promote the necessity of co-existence. Meanwhile, a front-page story in **Le Nouveau Courrier** alleges that people from the indigenous We ethnic group in the western town of Duekoue are being tracked down by government forces.

3. Detention conditions of supporters of the former regime

According to an article in **Notre Voie (p. 6)** supporters of former president Gbagbo who are being detained at the DST, the Ivorian state intelligence unit, have been subject to “torture.” The paper, which compares the intelligence unit to Hitler’s Gestapo, claims that most of the detainees are opposition leaders, lawyers, journalists and students.

April 13, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. President Alassane Ouattara receives the new French Ambassador
2. Finance Minister Charles Koffi says Cote d'Ivoire is on track for debt relief in June
3. The Ivorian government vows to reduce electricity consumption nationwide
4. Malian interim president sworn in amid fears of humanitarian crisis in the north

1. President Alassane Ouattara receives new French Ambassador

According to an article in ***Fraternite Matin (p. 6)*** President Alassane Ouattara received newly appointed ambassadors to Cote d'Ivoire yesterday. Among these foreign envoys is the new French ambassador Georges Serré. Mr. Serré, the paper said, recommitted the French government to supporting Ivorian authorities in their efforts to promote national reconciliation and post-crisis reconstruction. He also announced debt relief and the rehabilitation of the French cultural centre, a facility looted during the crisis. Other foreign envoys included the new Dutch ambassador Gerard Duijfjes and Swedish envoy Per Carlson, the paper added.

2. Finance Minister Charles Koffi says Cote d'Ivoire is on track for debt relief in June

A report by ***Le Patriote (p. 12)*** noted that Cote d'Ivoire is on a good track to achieve debt relief accord under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). The information, the paper said, was given in the course of a meeting yesterday between the Ivorian Minister of Finance, Charles Koffi Diby and officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to Mr. Charles Koffi, reforms undertaken by the government in the country's strategic sectors have been made in a bid to secure transparency, a move likely to qualify the country for HIPC by June.

Still on the issue, ***Soir Info (p. 10)*** noted that ahead of the country's admission under the IMF debt relief plan which will trigger the cancelation of around half of the country's \$13.5 billion external debt, the government has put in place a task force. According to Mr. Diby, this task force known as the CNDP (Comité National de Dette Publique) will help design a strategic debt policy in accordance with foreign partners and ensure the efficient use of the resources gained.

In a related development, ***L'Inter (p. 11)*** noted that the Ivorian government is also committed to the country's admission under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). According to the daily, in a bid to facilitate the country's admission, a government sponsored-commission was recently set up by the Ivorian Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. Albert Mabri Toikeuse. Contingent upon requirements such as good governance, the admission to the Millennium Challenge Corporation- an innovative and independent U.S. foreign aid agency that is helping lead the fight against global poverty- will allow the country to benefit from multi-faceted US support, Mr. Mabri said in his address.

3. The Ivorian government vows to reduce electricity consumption nationwide

According to a report by *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (p. 5)* the government is committed to reducing by some 40% in the coming years the country's electricity consumption. The announcement, the paper said, was made by the Ivorian Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou in the course of a ceremony designed to sensitize people on ways to reduce electricity consumption. On the occasion, the paper added, Prime Minister Ahoussou recommitted the government to undertaking measures to bring the high cost of living under control.

4. Malian interim president sworn in amid fear of humanitarian crisis in the north

Mali has sworn in parliament speaker Dioncounda Traoré as its transitional president, launching the restoration of civilian rule after last month's coup. The information was given by *Fraternite Matin (p. 2)* which noted that the move follows a deal brokered between ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States) and the military junta which seized power a few weeks ago after ousting former President Amadou Toumani. In his inaugural address, the country's new leader Dioncounda Traoré, a former veteran of the Malian opposition said his country is determined to recover regions occupied by rebels and Islamic militants. "I am aware that I am now president of a country at war, which must find peace again as soon as possible," the paper reported Traoré as saying. According to President Traoré, people in the northern cities of Tessalit, Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu- which are under the control of separatists factions - are victim to countless atrocities. He said he hopes the MNLA (Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) and Islamic group Ansar Dine will heed the call to leave peacefully but also warned that if war is the only solution, Mali will wage war.

In a separate development, the paper expressed skepticism about a military solution. According to the paper, it will not be easy to defeat separatists and Islamic factions controlling northern Mali, and armed conflict could bring unanticipated consequences to the sub region.

Nord Sud Quotidien (3) for its part noted that a total of 1,000 commandos from the Ivorian army are en route to Mali should ECOWAS decide to intervene.

April 12, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. Former French Ambassador says French troops paved the way for Gbagbo's capture last year
2. The Ivorian government to revise public sector employees' health insurance
3. Ivorian press watchdog CNP to be updated

1. Former French Ambassador says French troops paved the way for Gbagbo's capture last year

The anniversary of former president Laurent Gbagbo's April 11 arrest last year continued to be reported on in today's press. ***Fraternite Matin (pp. 2-3)*** noted that the event was highlighted yesterday by ceremonies held both by the ruling RHDP coalition and Gbagbo's FPI party, though the significance of the event was portrayed differently. "Today, we are celebrating truth over lies and also honoring the 3,000 victims of the crisis," the paper reported Mr. Amadou Soumahoro, the secretary general of President Ouattara's RDR party as saying. However, according to Mr. Sebastien Danon, an official from the FPI, April 11 recalls "a nightmarish day...a day of sorrow for partisans of the country's former leader and an attempt to silence democracy in Cote d'Ivoire."

Le Quotidien d'Abidjan (p.2) for its part, noted that French troops stationed in Cote d'Ivoire are the ones who made possible the arrest of the ex-leader by forces loyal to President Alassane Ouattara. The paper published an interview conducted yesterday by French wire services with Marc Simon, former French Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire. "A United Nations mandate authorized the French troops to destroy Gbagbo's heavy weapons... support that was critical for the FRCI (Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire) in their assault on the presidential palace," the French diplomat reportedly said.

For ***Aujourd' hui (p. 2)*** Gbagbo was betrayed by the Ivorian top military brass after key generals such as Philippe Mangou and Edouard Kassarate refused to fight back against France.

2. The Ivorian government to revise public sector employees' health insurance

Fraternite Matin (pp. 6-7) reports that at yesterday's cabinet meeting it was decided to suspend the leadership of the country's public sector health insurance company, known as the MUGEF-CI (Mutuelle Générale des Fonctionnaires de Côte d'Ivoire). Providing details, the paper noted that the decision is meant to put an end to a leadership conflict opposing rival groups within the company. According to government spokesperson Nabagne Kone, the measure will also allow the government to audit the insurance company which has been in place since 1989.

The move has however triggered mixed comments according to ***Soir Info (p. 11)*** which noted that the government decision contradicts somewhat a decision by an Abidjan court last week naming Mr. Joseph Holland Nda as the legitimate director of the board of the insurance company. The paper denounced governmental interference in the case.

3. Ivorian press watchdog CNP to be updated

Yesterday's cabinet meeting also announced the revision of the legal provisions ruling the CNP (Conseil National de la Presse), the country's print media watchdog. ***Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 6)*** noted that under these reforms, the independence of the CNP will be reinforced and selection criteria to designate members will be updated.

April 11, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. The anniversary of Gbagbo's April 11 arrest last year triggers mixed comments in the Ivorian press
2. An Abidjan court orders the release of military elements allegedly accused of plotting a coup
3. U.S. Embassy trains Ivorian librarians

1. The anniversary of Gbagbo's April 11 arrest last year triggers mixed comments in the Ivorian press

On this date last year, the four-month standoff that followed the presidential election in Cote d'Ivoire ended when troops loyal to the then-elected president Alassane Ouattara routed and captured former president Laurent Gbagbo who had refused to give up power. The anniversary was the subject of banner headlines in most dailies today as the arrest continues to provoke strong sentiments. Thus, for pro-governmental papers such as **Le Patriote** (which issued a special edition on the event), **Nord Sud Quotidien (pp. 2-3)** and le **Nouveau Reveil (pp. 5-6)**, April 11 is a landmark for democracy in the history of the country. According to these papers, it symbolizes the "triumph of democracy over dictatorship". For **Le Patriote (pp. 12-14)** this achievement was made thanks to key figures such as President Alassane Ouattara and the then-Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, as well as the former UN Special Envoy in Cote d'Ivoire Mr. Y.J. Choi and Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore who were actively involved in the case.

L'Inter (pp. 4-5) for its part noted that the support of the UN and France to the then presidential claimant Alassane Ouattara was critical during the stalemate. According to the paper, the outcome could have been different if a UN resolution authorizing the destruction of heavy weapons in a bid to protect civilians had not been passed. The paper went on to argue that a full-scale civil war was avoided thanks to the role played by the UN and France.

This assessment is however rejected by papers close to the former president which consider, Gbagbo's April 11 arrest as the outcome of an international plot headed by France against Cote d'Ivoire. According to **Notre Voie (pp. 2-4)** a mere electoral dispute was turned into a bloody war designed by France to secure its interests in what was once its colony. For **Le Temps (p. 3)** Cote d'Ivoire has since then lost its status as a free state.

Aujourd'hui (p. 3) paid tribute to Laurent Gbagbo for what it termed "his heroic resistance to neocolonialism."

2. An Abidjan court orders the release of military elements allegedly accused of plotting a coup

According to a report by ***L'Inter* (p. 2)** a military court in Abidjan ordered yesterday the release of the 21 individuals of the Ivorian army facing trial in connection with a coup attempt. The daily argued that the decision came after the court judge denounced inconsistencies in the case.

This development was welcomed by opposition papers namely ***Le Nouveau Courrier* (p. 3)** which noted that the accused were tagged as being close to Commandant Jean Noel Abehi, a dissident officer from the Ivorian army currently in exile.

3. U.S. Embassy trains Ivorian librarians

The US Embassy in Abidjan will be hosting a three-day workshop designed for librarians starting today. The information was reported by ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* (p. 3)** which noted that the session aims to empower Ivorian librarians in best practices in library management, including the efficient use of US Embassy Rotating Libraries.

April 10, 2012

Today's Top Stories

1. ECOWAS lifts sanctions against Mali
2. Mutual grievances hamper dialogue between the Ivorian government and the opposition
3. Ivorian bishop Kutwa says Easter celebration mirrors hope
4. U.S. embassy finances projects aimed at fostering reconciliation

1. ECOWAS lifts sanctions against Mali

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has lifted sanctions against Mali, after a deal was reached between the regional block and the military junta. Providing details in its weekend release ***Fraternite Matin (pp. 30-31)*** noted that the regional block said the leaders of the military coup are committed to restoring constitutional rule. "We want to believe that the military junta can be trusted, and on that basis we have lifted the sanctions," the paper reported an official from the ECOWAS as saying. Under the deal, the paper added, former Malian speaker of parliament Dioncounda Traore will serve as president with a transitional government until elections are held.

This development came as a separatist faction known as the MNL (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) last week proclaimed the independence of what it calls the Azawad state. This faction is in control of the cities of Timbuktu, Gao and other areas in northern Mali, the paper said. According to the daily, the announcement was unanimously condemned by the African Union and western countries.

Still on the issue, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 6)*** noted that the decision by the military junta to restore the constitutional order is a landmark victory for the Ivorian leader who has been very actively involved in his capacity as the chairperson of the ECOWAS. However, for ***Notre Voie (p. 2)*** a leadership conflict is brewing between the Ivorian President and his Burkina Faso counterpart Blaise Compaore as both leaders are trying to take the spotlight as the Malian crisis is raging.

2. Mutual grievances hamper dialogue between the Ivorian government and the opposition

According to ***Soir Info (p. 3)*** the "republican dialogue" between the Ivorian government and the opposition led by former President Laurent Gbagbo's FPI is at risk as a result of mutual recriminations by both parties. Thus, the daily argued that the FPI is criticizing the move by the Ivorian government to include in the discussion panel people that the FPI considers hardliners. Naming the Ivorian Minister of Interior, Hamed Bakayoko and the Secretary General of the ruling RDR party, Mr. Amadou Soumahoro, the paper noted that the FPI leadership said it is concerned by the involvement of these individuals in of the dialogue process. Similarly, government officials are concerned that FPI dignitaries such as Laurent Akoun, Justin Koua and Michel Amani have been aiming inflammatory rhetoric against President Alassane Ouattara and are therefore unlikely play a constructive role in the dialogue process. According to the daily this does not bode well for the process designed to find common ground.

3. Ivorian bishop Kutwa says Easter celebration mirrors hope

As in most countries, Ivorians celebrated Easter over the weekend. The event made news in most dailies and ***Fraternite Matin* (p. 15)** noted that on the occasion, Ivorian bishop Jean Pierre Kutwa called for hope and brotherly love. "This celebration gives us reasons to have hope for a better future...It calls on us to exalt mutual love to avoid wars and conflicts," the paper reported him as saying in his sermon.

4. U.S. embassy finances projects aimed at fostering reconciliation

A report by ***Fraternite Matin* (p. 5)** noted in its weekend edition that the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan, through the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) has financed projects designed by *Search for Common Ground* - a US-based NGO in a bid to foster reconciliation. According to the daily, the announcement was made Friday at a ceremony held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the paper, two reconciliation programs composed of documentary films on the reconciliation process have been made possible thanks to the \$ 2.4 million grant awarded to *Search for Common Grounds* which according to its country Director Mr. Quentin Kanyatsi aims at promoting intercommunity ties. In his address, U.S. Ambassador Philip Carter III called for "positive change to promote the reconciliation of the Ivorian people." The Ivorian Minister of War Veterans and Victims, Mr. Mathieu Babaud thanked the U.S. government for the support in building lasting peace in Cote d'Ivoire.

April 6, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. West African military leaders meet in Abidjan to address the Malian crisis
2. Ivorian Minister says human rights situation has improved nationwide
3. President Ouattara to visit the war-torn western region
4. The U.S. voices concerns over emerging drug trafficking networks on the African continent

1. West African military leaders meet in Abidjan to address the Malian crisis

Army chiefs of staff from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) gathered yesterday in Abidjan for an emergency meeting on the Malian crisis. Providing details on the closed-door meeting, *Soir Info (pp. 2-3)* noted that the move was meant to discuss a possible intervention by the regional bloc's standby forces. "I called on you to prepare an operational plan of action for deployment of the ECOWAS standby forces," the paper reported Mr. Paul Koffi Koffi, the Ivorian Minister in charge of Defense as saying in his opening remarks. According to the daily, French and U.S. military advisers attended the session. This update, according to *Fraternite Matin (p.14)*, came as the regional bloc has already imposed trade and diplomatic embargos on the landlocked country in response to the military coup last month, which has exacerbated the challenges posed by separatists in northern Mali.

As a result of the crisis, security measures along the borders between Cote d'Ivoire and Mali have been reinforced according to *L'Inter (p. 4)*. The paper noted that French Licorne forces have been deployed to the region to monitor security. This detachment has already started mixed patrols with Ivorian army staff (FRCI) and UN troops stationed in the area, the paper added.

2. Ivorian Minister says human rights situation has improved nationwide

According to the Ivorian Minister of Human Rights, Mr. Gnenema Coulibaly, substantive improvements have been made in this area over the recent months. Speaking in an interview with *Fraternite Matin (pp. 2-3)*, Mr. Coulibaly said that this achievement stems from actions initiated by the Ivorian government to secure human rights throughout the country. He recommitted the government to undertaking the necessary reforms in the sector to fight impunity and to supporting the actions of human rights groups operating in Cote d'Ivoire. According to Mr. Coulibaly, though a lot of challenges remain, there are reasonable arguments to be upbeat.

This assessment is however rejected by *Notre Voie (p. 2)* which noted that former President Laurent Gbagbo's aides arrested in the wake of his capture are being denied basic rights. According to the daily, the political inmates, detained in makeshift prisons in the northern part of the country with undocumented charges, are living in inhumane conditions.

In a related development, the paper (*p. 2*) noted that at least six people close to the Ivorian leader are being targeted by a recent decision by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is probing

crimes committed during the 2002 armed rebellion. These individuals, including former Premier Guillaume Soro and warlord Cherif Ousmane are accused of human rights abuses, the paper said.

3. President Ouattara to visit the war-torn western region

On home affairs, dailies reported that President Alassane Ouattara is due to visit the western region of Cote d'Ivoire. Providing details on the forthcoming state visit, *Soir Info (p. 3)* noted that important measures are being taken ahead of the event. Thus, the paper argued that security issues are being addressed with efforts to crack down on banditry in the war-torn area. Similarly, *L'Inter (p. 5)* noted that youth from the ruling RDR party and its allies have joined with representatives from the opposition parties, including the FPI and the CNRD, to ensure the visit is successfully carried out.

4. The U.S. voices concerns on emerging drug trafficking networks on the African continent

Drug trafficking is becoming an alarming practice on the African continent according to a report by *L'Inter (p. 7)*. This situation, the paper said, is a major concern for the United States, which has enhanced control measures and blacklisted certain countries where drug trafficking is growing. According to U.S. experts, there is a correlation between drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism, hence the need to address the emerging threat on the continent in a timely manner.

APRIL 5, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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- 1.U.S. Government-fostered reconciliation programs to be launched tomorrow
- 2.Debate on whether former first lady should be transferred to the ICC
- 3.West African army commanders meeting in Abidjan on the crisis in Mali

1. U.S. Government-fostered reconciliation programs to be launched tomorrow

An article in *L'Inter* (p. 2) says that the U. S. Government is to finance two reconciliation programs in Cote d'Ivoire. The article says that the US \$2.2 million programs, which will be implemented by Search for Common Ground, seek to advance the U.S. Government and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire's mutual priorities in democracy, governance, and reconciliation by supporting processes that will promote societal healing and social cohesion at the national and community levels. The article also notes that this substantial assistance to the reconciliation process came after the U.S. Government's diplomatic support to Cote d'Ivoire during the 2010-2011 post electoral crisis. These reconciliation programs, comments the paper, will help heal the social fiber that was severely affected after the political and military crisis that the country went through.

"Two reconciliation programs to be launched soon," says a headline in *the state-run AIP news agency*, "Reconciliation and social cohesion in Cote d'Ivoire, U.S. Government to launch two programs," writes *Notre Heure, an Ivorian independent general news website*, while short articles in *Nord-Sud Quotidien* (p. 4) and *L'Intelligent d'Abidjan* (p. 3) say that the United States is to launch today two reconciliation programs dubbed "J'aime mon pays" and "Avancons ensemble."

Meanwhile, *Le Nouveau Courrier* carries a front-page headline casting doubt about the success of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up by the Ivorian Government. "Is an obituary being written for Banny's commission?" asks a front-page headline in the paper, which comments (p. 3) that Charles Konan Banny, the Chairman of this commission, has yet to inspire confidence in Ivoirians almost eight months after the commission started work. The article also questions Banny's capacity to lead the reconciliation, and goes on to say that this reconciliation process, which was announced with great fanfare, has turned out to be a hoax. The article also claims that the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire might have announced this reconciliation process, just to get support from their "sponsors", adding that the government and the head of the commission are not speaking with the same voice.

2. Debate on whether former first lady should be transferred to the ICC

With a front-page headline saying, "the secret behind the ICC deputy prosecutor's visit to Abidjan," *Le Nouveau Courrier* (p. 5) claims that Fatou Bensouda's visit was part of "a face saving" maneuver following the International Criminal Court's "incoherent and selective" position on who should be

charged for alleged crimes committed during the Ivorian crisis. The paper also suggests that before the visit of the ICC deputy prosecutor, a section of the local media supportive of President Alassane Ouattara has tried to focus on the possible transfer of the former first lady to The Hague - a strategy which, the paper says, was designed to distract public attention from the main purpose of this visit. The paper quotes insiders as saying that Bensouda used her meeting with President Ouattara as an opportunity to ask the latter to cooperate in the prosecution of some of his associates.

In a related development, **Le Nouveau Courrier (p. 1)** carries a front-page headline denouncing "collusion between Ouattara's camp and the ICC," using as evidence an alleged congratulatory letter sent to Guillaume Soro by the ICC chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, on the occasion of Soro's election as the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Ocampo's alleged letter to Soro is also the subject of a front-page headline in **L'Inter** which comments that this letter will revive the debate over the impartiality and credibility of the ICC.

"Should Simone be sent to the ICC?" asks **Nord-Sud Quotidien (p. 4)** which quotes sources as saying that President Ouattara is opposed to the idea of transferring the former first lady, Simone Gbagbo, to The Hague on the ground that the transfer could undermine the reconciliation process underway in Cote d'Ivoire. "If Cote d'Ivoire has the means to punish the culprits without being accused of being partial, it would prefer to try its nationals on its soil," the paper quotes Government's spokesman Bruno Kone as saying yesterday in the wake of the ICC deputy prosecutor's visit to Cote d'Ivoire. Kone is also reported as saying that the decision to accept the transfer of the former president Laurent Gbagbo came when conditions for his trial at home could not be met.

3. West African army commanders meeting in Abidjan on the crisis in Mali

An article in **Fraternite Matin (p. 9)** says that West African army commanders are set to hold an emergency meeting today in Abidjan on the situation in neighboring Mali which is confronted by a coup d'etat and a rebellion. According to the paper, today's meeting is the follow-up of a decision that was taken earlier by West African leaders to prepare regional peacekeeping forces for possible intervention in this country. As the ECOWAS regional block is working to resolve the crisis in Mali, **L'Inter (p. 6)** quotes the Ivorian Government spokesperson as saying, "Cote d'Ivoire is ready to provide financial and human resources."

APRIL 4, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. ICC Deputy Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda met with President Ouattara
2. Ivorian media reports says "Mali is at an impasse"
3. Government and opposition dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire

1. ICC Deputy Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda met with President Ouattara

With a picture of the ICC deputy prosecutor on its front-page, *Nord-Sud Quotidien* carries a prominent headline asking, "Who is Bensouda targeting?" Another front-page headline quotes the ICC deputy prosecutor as saying "I'm not here for Simone Gbagbo." The ICC Deputy Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda was speaking to reporters yesterday in Abidjan after talks with President Alassane Ouattara, reports the paper (**p. 3**) which expresses concerns about the visit of the deputy prosecutor to Cote d'Ivoire. "I've come to Cote d'Ivoire to discuss with the authorities how they can cooperate with our investigations," the paper quotes Bensouda as saying. The ICC deputy prosecutor is also reported as saying that "the International Criminal Court continues to investigate all sides" regarding the alleged crimes that were committed during the post-electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire.

Reporting on the visit of the ICC deputy prosecutor, *Fraternite Matin* carries a front-page story saying that Bensouda has come to Cote d'Ivoire to evaluate investigations being conducted in Western Cote d'Ivoire where many people were killed. The paper (**p. 5**) also quotes ICC deputy prosecutor as saying that cooperation between the court and the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire is "excellent".

An article in *L'Inter* (**p. 4**) suggests that the ICC's investigations into the crimes allegedly committed in Cote d'Ivoire are running up against the decision by Ivorian authorities "to stop any procedure that could lead to the transfer of the former first lady to The Hague." The paper goes on to quote analysts as saying that the transfer of Mrs Simone Gbagbo to the ICC could "pave the way for the transfer of pro-Ouattara supporters to the ICC," and that "some former warlords could be targeted." The commentator points out that the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire are wary about the transfer of the former warlords and the "consequences" for the regime.

A prominent headline in *Notre Voie* claims that there is "a hidden agenda" behind the ICC deputy prosecutor's visit to Cote d'Ivoire. An article in this paper (**p. 2**) also claims that during a meeting yesterday with the Ivorian Justice Minister, Matto Lomah Cisse, Bensouda wanted to know why the Ivorian authorities no longer want to execute the arrest warrants issued against persons who have been charged by the ICC, including the former first lady. As a response to the ICC deputy prosecutor's inquiry, the paper quotes Ivorian authorities as saying, "The Ivorian government has decided to try Mrs Gbagbo and other people in Cote d'Ivoire."

"Transfer of Mrs Gbagbo: What Mrs Bensouda did not say," reads a front-page headline in *Le Nouveau Reveil* which notes that after her meeting with President Ouattara, the ICC deputy prosecutor carefully avoided any questions relating to the execution of the arrest warrants issued against pro-Gbagbo supporters including the former first lady. The paper (**p. 3**) however quotes the

ICC deputy prosecutor as saying “We’ve come to Cote d’Ivoire to prepare the judicial procedure leading to the confirmation of charges against Gbagbo.” With a picture of the former president on its front page, the paper casts doubt on “the release of Gbagbo” after the June 18 hearing at The Hague.

A front-page headline in ***L’Intelligent d’Abidjan*** (p. 1) claims that “the trial of Gbagbo” was on the top of the agenda during the meeting yesterday between President Ouattara and the ICC deputy prosecutor.

2. Ivorian media reports “Mali is at an impasse”

The deteriorating situation in Mali is the subject of front-page headlines in the Ivorian press with a prominent headline in ***Fraternite Matin*** reading, “Mali is at an impasse.” Another front-page headline in this paper says that the military junta that staged a coup d’etat a fortnight ago in Mali has hardened its position after the ECOWAS regional body imposed sanctions on the country. With a picture of a defiant junta leader Amadou Sanogo, the paper informs readers that the coup plotters yesterday announced a national convention to determine the country’s future direction. The paper also reports on the junta’s intention to try the deposed president Amadou Toumani Toure for “high treason and misappropriation of funds.”

In a related development, a front-page story in ***Soir Info*** says that former Ivorian warlords are getting ready after the ECOWAS regional block announced plan to send peacekeepers to restore order in Mali. A statement in ***Nord-Sud Quotidien*** (p. 5) says that West African chiefs of defense staff are due to meet in Abidjan on April 5 to discuss the situation in Mali

3. Government and opposition dialogue in Cote d’Ivoire

An article in ***Soir Info*** (p. 6) speculates on why the political dialogue between the government and the opposition FPI party has yet to start. The paper suggests that President Ouattara’s busy schedule as the ECOWAS chairman and the current crisis in Mali have forced the president to put aside some domestic affairs. The paper also claims that the president may be giving priority to the government’s efforts to cut down the high cost living in a bid to ensure the wellbeing of Ivoirians.

APRIL 3, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. Prime Minister Kouadio and Ambassador Carter holds talk on Cote d'Ivoire-USA bilateral relations
2. President Ouattara set to meet with ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda
3. Ivorian government steps up efforts to restore security in the country
4. The impact of the political crisis in Mali on Cote d'Ivoire

1. Prime Minister Ahoussou and Ambassador Carter holds talk on Cote d'Ivoire-USA bilateral relations

A report in ***Fraternite Matin (p. 5)*** says that U.S assistance programs in Cote d'Ivoire were high on the agenda Monday during a meeting between Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio and Ambassador Phillip Carter III. "We evaluated the assistance program in Cote d'Ivoire," the paper quotes Ambassador Carter as saying to reporters after the meeting. According to the paper, Ambassador Carter also reaffirmed the USG's commitment to continue its assistance programs in various domains including health through the PEPFAR. "This year, we'll contribute US \$30 million as part of the PEPFAR program in Cote d'Ivoire," ***the state broadcaster RTI television, state AIP news agency and ONUCI FM*** quote Ambassador Carter as saying. Ambassador Carter is also quoted as saying that other U.S. assistance programs will focus on the reform of the security sector, good governance, reconciliation and economic growth.

"Security, good governance: United States and EU to support Cote d'Ivoire," writes ***Nord-Sud Quotidien (p. 6)***. With a picture of Prime Minister Ahoussou and Ambassador Carter shaking hands warmly, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 6)*** also carries a headline reading: "United States and EU pledge to support Ahoussou;" while a prominent headline in ***L'Expression (p. 4)*** says: "Obama reaffirms his support for Cote d'Ivoire." ***Le Nouveau Quotidien (p. 9)*** also carries a picture of President Obama with a headline reading, "The United States injects US \$30 million into fight against HIV/AIDS in 2012."

With more on U.S.-Cote d'Ivoire bilateral relations, ***Le Nouveau Reveil (p. 6)*** reports that an AGOA information resources center has been opened in Abidjan. The article says that Ambassador Carter and the Minister of Commerce, Dagobert Banzio presided over the opening ceremony last Friday. "For the United States, this new center constitutes a significant step that will help companies have access to the American market," the paper quotes Ambassador as saying.

In another development, a front-page headline in ***L'Intelligent d'Abidjan*** announces that the Department of State will adjust visa application fees for immigrant and nonimmigrant visas as of April 13, 2012. The paper (***p. 2***) also carries the full text of a statement issued by the Embassy announcing

these measures. *L'Inter* (p. 3), *Le Nouveau Quotidien* (p. 12) and the state AIP news agency also carry the statement.

2. President Ouattara set to meet with ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda

A prominent headline in *Soir Info* (p. 1) says that President Ouattara is to hold talks with the International Criminal Court's Chief Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda on investigations underway in Cote d'Ivoire in connection with crimes allegedly committed in this country during the recent post-electoral crisis. According to the paper (p. 3), discussions between the president and the ICC prosecutor will be dominated by the case of the former first lady, Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, who is being detained in the northern town of Odienne in connection with these alleged crimes. The article also suggests that the ICC has issued an arrest warrant against Mrs Gbagbo; but hints that President Ouattara could use the occasion to reiterate his position that "all those who would be targeted by the ICC's order, including Mrs Gbagbo, should be tried in Cote d'Ivoire."

"Bensouda to negotiate the transfer of Mrs Gbagbo," reads a front-page headline in *Le Nouveau Reveil* with a picture of the former first lady. Another prominent headline suggests that Ivorian authorities are reluctant to accept the transfer of the former first lady to The Hague.

Meanwhile, a banner headline in *Le Nouveau Courrier* (p. 1) claims that President Ouattara and the ICC have staged a drama designed "to save Soro and his men from ICC prosecution." The article (p. 3) accuses the ICC of being "the mouthpiece of superpowers," which "support President Ouattara." The article also suggests that in order to avoid the former prime minister Guillaume Soro and the former rebel leaders being tried by the ICC, President Ouattara will tell the chief prosecutor that "in the name of reconciliation he has decided not to execute any further arrest warrant issued by the ICC." "Under this scenario," comments the paper, "Soro and the Com'Zones can go and sleep; as they will continue to enjoy the state of impunity to the detriment of numerous victims."

"I'll be back to my country," reads a prominent headline in *Notre Voie* (p. 1) which attributes the statement to former president Laurent Gbagbo, who, according to the paper, was speaking from his cell in The Hague.

3. Ivorian government steps up efforts to restore security in the country

A banner headline in *Fraternite Matin* (p. 1) says that Ivorian authorities have moved to reinforce security ahead of the Easter festivities. According to the article (p. 7), this was announced by the Minister in charge of Defense, Koffi Koffi Paul, who vowed "to crack down on armed gangs." The minister, the report says, met on Monday with the country's top security brass. The article also says that as part of security measures, the gendarmerie is to reactivate operations dubbed "Araignée" and "Renard" in order to track down armed robbers across the country. To crack down on armed gangs during the Easter festivities, the government is to deploy 1,500 soldiers across the country, says a prominent headline in *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 1).

4. The impact of the political crisis in Mali on Cote d'Ivoire

With the political stalemate in neighboring Mali along with the recent progress made by the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad's rebels and AQMI-back Jihadists from their northern stronghold towards the south, *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 1) carries a prominent headline suggesting

that "The crisis unfolding in Mali threatens Cote d'Ivoire." The paper sounds the alarm in the wake of an emergency Summit that brought together in Dakar West African leaders, who, according to the paper, have vowed "to deploy 2,000 West African peacekeeping forces in Mali." An article **(p. 3)** also says that Mali is engulfed in what the paper describes as "total confusion" threatening security in the whole West African region.

APRIL 2, 2012

Today's Top Stories

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1. Mixed reactions after President Ouattara's interview with state media on the state of the country after nearly a year of stewardship
2. Investigation into the post-electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire
3. Ivorian authorities move to monitor security in the troubled western regions
4. AGOA information resources center opens in Abidjan

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1. Mixed reactions after President Ouattara's pronouncement on the state of the country after nearly a year of stewardship

A front-page headline in today's issue of *Fraternite Matin* describes as "encouraging" government's performance 10 months after President Alassane Ouattara assumed power. The paper is commenting on President Ouattara's interview with the state media last week at which the president pledged to build "a powerful Cote d'Ivoire." "We need to build a strong, professional and republican army," the paper quoted President Ouattara as saying in its weekend's edition. On the state of the country, almost a year ago when he took the reins of power, the president was reported as saying that the economy was "bankrupt" and the situation in Cote d'Ivoire was "a shame." However, in today's issue, the paper (**p. 3**) notes that the high cost of living remains a challenge for the government.

Commenting also on President Ouattara's statement, *Le Nouveau Reveil* (**p. 6**) says that the president has restored "hope" among Ivorians. "This year, we are expecting 8 per cent economic growth as opposed to 5 per cent last year," the paper quotes President Ouattara as saying. In a related development, the paper carries a front-page headline suggesting that the government will take measures aimed at tackling the high cost of food commodities. In an article (**p. 2**), the paper quotes Prime Minister Jeannot Ahoussou Kouadio as saying that "the government's objective is to bring the current 4 per cent inflation rate to 2.3 per cent by the end of the year."

"Did Ouattara convince Ivorians?" asks a banner headline in *Nord-Sud Quotidien* which quotes a member of the Lider opposition party as saying: "We need actions and not words."

Meanwhile, President Ouattara's statement on the state of the country is also a subject today in pro-opposition newspapers including *Notre Voie* which carries a prominent headline asking, "Where are the 50,000 jobs that Ouattara promised?" Another prominent headline describes President Ouattara's statement as "a pack of lies and fabrications"; while another headline highlights the government's "inability" to reopen the country's universities that have remained closed since the end of the post-electoral crisis in Cote d'Ivoire.

2. Investigation into the post-electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire

A front-page story in **Soir Info** says that lawyers and the state prosecutor will be meeting today over the case of the former first lady, Simone Gbagbo, who is being detained in the northern town of Odienne pending investigations into alleged crimes committed during the 2010-2011 post-electoral.

In a related development, a report in the weekend issue of **Notre Voie (p. 6)** alleged that one of the lawyers of Mrs Gbagbo was arrested last weekend in Abidjan upon return from abroad. According to the paper, the lawyer, Rodrigue Dadjé, is being detained by the DST, a state intelligence unit.

With more on the investigation into the post-electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire, **Nord-Sud Quotidien (p. 1)** reported in its weekend issue that "three judges are hunting down Ble Goude." According to the paper **(p. 5)** an arrest warrant has been issued against the former youth leader for his alleged involvement in the alleged crimes committed during the political crisis.

3. Ivorian authorities move to monitor security in the troubled western regions

A report in **Fraternite Matin (p. 5)** quotes the leader of a militia group as saying, "We've received 40 tons of ammunition." According to the paper, the gangs were arrested recently in the western town of Bangolo. "We are hundreds of militiamen who continue to carry arms because they have promised to pay us 500,000 FCFA (about US \$1,000) to participate in some operations," the paper quotes the group leader as saying.

4. AGOA information resources center opens in Abidjan

"The AGOA information resources center constitutes a significant step that will help companies have access to the American market," an article on **the web site of the state-run AIP news agency** quotes Ambassador Phillip Carter III as saying last week in Abidjan during the opening ceremony of the AGOA information resources center. The Ambassador is also reported as saying that the center will provide Ivorian companies with information that they need to have access to the American market. **L'Intelligent d'Abidjan (p. 9) and Le Quotidien d'Abidjan (p. 6)** reported on the opening center in their weekend issues.

Media affiliation and circulation

Fraternite Matin	State-owned daily newspaper	23,000
L'Intelligent d'Abidjan	Privately-owned daily, leans pro-President Alassane Ouattara	7,000
L'Inter	Independent daily	20,000
Nord-Sud Quotidien	Daily close to Prime Minister Guillaume Soro	10,000
Notre Voie	Daily close to the FPI, the party of Former President Laurent Gbagbo	15,000
Le Nouveau Courrier	Daily close to the FPI, the party of Former President Laurent Gbagbo	10,000
Le Nouveau Reveil	Daily close to the PDCI-RDA, the party of Former President Henri Konan Bedie	17,000
Le Patriote	Daily close to the RDR, the party of President Alassane Ouattara	17,000
RTI TV	State broadcaster	
Soir Info	Independent daily	22,000
AIP	State News Agency	

NOTE: Newspaper circulation figures represent the number of copies printed, not actual sales.