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en Côte d'Ivoire



UNITED NATIONS
United Nations Operation in
Côte d'Ivoire

Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference *(Abidjan, 3 March 2011)*

UNOCI RECEIVES TWO ATTACK HELICOPTERS

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on Tuesday received two MI-24 attack helicopters and is expecting a third one very soon, the Mission's spokesperson, Hamadoun Touré, announced on Tuesday, in Abidjan during his weekly press conference.

The acquisition of these equipments, Mr. Touré explained, will reinforce UNOCI's operational capacity and will efficiently contribute to the protection of civilians. "UNOCI wants to stress that these helicopters will be used to promote peace and provide protection," the spokesperson reiterated. "We have no reason to attack anyone with these equipments, we did not do it with our guns, we did not do it with our tanks, so there is no reason why we should do it with these MI-24", he said in response to a question, while stressing that UNOCI will never act as an aggressor.

With regard to another military issue, Mr. Touré said that UNOCI had carried out 864 air and ground patrols throughout the country during the past week, but he said, however, said that roadblocks and other obstacles were still being observed. In this regard, the spokesperson said that the number of obstacles was estimated to be 1.68%, refuting a rumour which claims that there was dissension between military and civil staff within the Mission.

Concerning the humanitarian situation, the Force provided free medical treatment to 473 Ivorians and distributed 14,000 litres of drinking water, said Mr. Touré, adding that since 28 February 2010, the CNO zones (centre, north and west) have been deprived of electricity and consequently, water too. "Faced with this situation, in addition to the humanitarian crisis with the increasing number of refugees and IDPs, as well as the threat of disease, UNOCI decided to assist the population as much as possible in its areas of responsibility", he added.

Reading from a press statement, the deputy director of the Human Rights Division, Guillaume Ngefa, warned that perpetrators of violations of human rights and

humanitarian rights would be held accountable for their actions. UNOCI said it was extremely concerned by the armed confrontations in the west, Yamoussoukro and some neighbourhoods in Abidjan. In addition, Mr. Ngefa added, UNOCI had observed a new explosion of violence, characterised on the one hand by targeted attacks against UNOCI and its personnel following a call made by Charles Blé Goudé, leader of the Young Patriots, and on the other by street confrontations between armed youths of the *La Majorité Présidentielle* (LMP) and the *Rassemblement des Houphouétistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix* (RHDP).

Mr. Ngefa also gave an assessment of the overall human rights situation, stating that in one week, 50 people had died during violent clashes between the Ivorian Defence and Security Forces (FDS) and the Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) and other insurgents in some towns in the country, bringing the total number of deaths since mid-December 2010 to 365.

Asked about the humanitarian situation in Abobo, Mr. Touré announced that UNOCI was working with other partners to open a humanitarian corridor, which will allow people to leave or enter as they wish and allow workers to remove corpses so that they can receive a decent burial and avoid the risk of disease. “UNOCI will also ask the two parties to observe a truce in Abobo, so that people can be provided with water and food,” the spokesman added.

Questioned on the issue of the “delivery of attack helicopters” to President Laurent Gbagbo’s camp, Mr. Touré said that UNOCI, having been prevented from accessing the site in order to check the veracity of the report of experts in charge of observing and monitoring the arms embargo, had communicated the information without checking it, which had led to the incident. “We admitted what happened and we did what needed to be done on the diplomatic front. We have certainly learnt our lesson,” he concluded.

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