

Invasion Of Ivory Coast Imminent?

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Is Attack On Ivorian Gbagbo Imminent?

Freetown: The majority of the heads of the various armed forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have, in an extraordinary meeting in Bamako – the Malian capital – adopted a resolution to depose incumbent Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo from power by force.

The objective of the meeting was to make a follow-up to previous ECOWAS military chiefs meetings in December last year during which they unanimously decided to remove the intransigent Ivorian leader from power by force if mediation efforts to convince him to willingly step down fail to achieve fruitful results.

In this regards the current rotating chairman of the ECOWAS Authority, Nigerian President Goodluck E. Jonathan, dispatched a high level ECOWAS leaders delegation comprised of the presidents of Benin, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone on the 27th of December, 2010 with an ultimatum to Gbagbo in Abidjan, the Ivorian capital where he resides in the presidential palace, to step down in exchange for certain incentives such as the guarantee of his security, financial guarantees and a safe exit to a country of his choice.

Discussions were also held with his rival Dr. Alassane Ouattara, whose parallel government is recognized by the international community... ..

Up to yesterday the ECOWAS military heads enumerated a number of challenges that may seem to thwart the planned invasion. Ghana, a neighbouring country to the Ivory Coast, has issued a communiqué dissociating itself from any ECOWAS attempt to topple Gbagbo from power by force in view of the cultural and historical ties between the two countries and fears of reprisals and witch-hunting against the large number of Ghanaians residing in that country.

Nigeria, which played a principal role in peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, has not been very enthusiastic about any planned military intervention. In the words of President Goodluck Jonathan, he views the use of force as only necessary after exploring every dialogue and peaceful avenue. Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Liberia, Mali and Togo are expected to participate, while Niger is still to confirm. A line up of about 20,000 troops are the estimate to guarantee the success of the mission although contributing countries have indicated that they can only afford about 3,000 troops.

Given the experience gained from the military operations of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping force headed by Nigeria against the interests of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front (NPFL) rebel forces in Liberia....

It takes not only the political will needed from ECOWAS leaders but also billions of dollars annually to keep combat forces in the field. In assembling troops for the invasion of Liberia, it took the personal interest of President Ibrahim Babangida to dispatch Nigerian combat troops, ships, cargo-planes and military helicopters which were initially stationed in Freetown where the participating troops went through initial training for the invasion.

The Ivory Coast is one of the largest countries in West Africa with a population of about 16 million and...well-equipped military forces, comprising ground forces, air forces and the navy. In fact several West African French-speaking states have been using the Ivorian military's training facilities. This is why there is a need to draw up a clear plan and an overview of the military situation in the country before venturing to invade and establish to power...Alassane Ouattara.

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The reason why some ECOWAS member states are dragging feet on the issue of military intervention is because if a United Nations air and naval embargo is placed on the Ivory Coast thereby hampering that country's export capability and an eventual military victory to achieve the objective of deposing Gbagbo...the democratically elected government of President Ouattara, the consequences can be serious in financial and material terms as well as in the loss of human lives.

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Gbagbo has clearly stated his position that the country's Constitutional Council, which has the mandate to approve the results released by the National Electoral Commission certified and approved him as the winner at the polls after releasing parallel results....

<http://www.afriquej et.com/news/ africa-news/ burkina-faso- will-take- part-in-possible -use-of-force- against-gbagbo- 2011012068104. html>

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