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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

IVORY COAST

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PREFACE

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 14 November 2006.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Ivory Coast is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

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Background information on Ivory Coast

Full Country Name: Republic of Ivory Coast (Republique de Côte d'Ivoire)

Area: total: 322,460 sq km, land 318,000 sq km, water 4,460 sq km

Population: 17,654,843 (July 2006 est.)

Capital City: name: Yamoussoukro: geographic coordinates: 5 19 N, 4 02 W, time difference: UTC 0 (5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time) note: although Yamoussoukro has been the official capital since 1983, Abidjan remains the commercial and administrative centre; the US, like other countries, maintains its Embassy in Abidjan.

People: Akan 42.1%; Voltaiques or Gur 17.6%; Northern Mandes 16.5%; Krous 11%; Southern Mandes 10%; other 2.8% (includes 130,000 Lebanese and 14,000 French) (1998).

Languages: French (official), 60 native dialects with Dioula the most widely spoken.

Religion(s): Muslim 35-40%, indigenous 25-40%, Christian 20-30% (2001).

Note: the majority of foreigners (migratory workers) are Muslim (70%) and Christian (20%).

Currency: Communauté Financière Africaine franc (XOF); the issuing authority is the Central Bank of the West African States.

Major Political Parties and leaders: Citizen's Democratic Union or UDCY [Theodore MEL]; Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally or PDCI-RDA [Henri Konan BEDIE]; Ivorian Popular Front or FPI [Laurent GBAGBO]; Ivorian Worker's Party or PIT [Francis WODIE]; Rally of the Republicans or RDR [Alassane OUATTARA]; Union for Democracy and Peace or UDPCI [Paul Akoto YAO]; over 20 smaller parties.

Head of State: President Laurent GBAGBO (since 26 October 2000)

Prime Minister: Prime Minister Charles Konan BANNY (since 7 December 2005)

International organization participation: ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, ECOWAS, Entente, FAO, FZ, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT (signatory), ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ITU, MIGA, NAM, OIC, OIF, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UPU, WADB (regional), WAEMU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTO. (US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices, 8 March 2006) [1]

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GEOGRAPHY

US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices, 8 March 2006 notes that: "Ivory Coast is situated in Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Ghana and Liberia." [1]

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RECENT HISTORY

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, 25 March 2006, notes that: "Cote d'Ivoire was part of French colonial West Africa. It was a major area of agricultural development under French rule, attracting immigrant workers from throughout the French African Empire. It gained independence from France in 1960, retaining close ties with the former colonial power through a number of bilateral agreements including

membership of the Franc Zone, a Defence Pact, and provision for a French military base in the country.” [3]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, 25 March 2006, also states that: “Felix Houphouet-Boigny became the first President and ruled for 33 years until his death in 1993. His party, the PDCI, was the sole legal party until 1990 when multipartyism was introduced. During his time in office, Cote d'Ivoire was renowned as the most prosperous and most stable country in the West African region. It also hosted the largest French community in francophone Africa. His rule was shaken by economic recession in the 1980s, when commodity prices of the main exports, cocoa and coffee, plunged.” [3]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile, 25 March 2006, notes that: “The first multi-party elections since independence were held in 1990 which Houphout-Boigny easily won against veteran opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo. At his death in 1993, he was succeeded by Henri Konan Bedie, the speaker of the National Assembly. The careful ethnic and regional balance which Houphouet-Biogny had nurtured, together with his welcoming of immigrant workers, was soon compromised, by the concept of 'Ivoirite' (Ivorian nationalism), which quickly acquired xenophobic connotations. This began a sequence of events which was to deprive the country of its long record of stability and prosperity.” [3]

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RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices, 8 March 2006, states that: “Cote d'Ivoire is a democratic republic with an estimated population of 18 million. Laurent Gbagbo, candidate of the Ivorian People's Front (FPI), became the country's third elected president in 2000. The election, which excluded two of the major parties, the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) and the Rally for Republicans (RDR), was marred by significant violence and irregularities. The Supreme Court declared Gbagbo the victor with 53 percent of the vote. In September 2002 exiled military members and coconspirators simultaneously attacked government ministers and military/security facilities in Abidjan, Bouake, and Korhogo. The failed coup attempt evolved into a rebellion and split the country in two. Rebel "New Forces" (NF) retained control of the northern 60 percent of the country, while the government controlled the slightly smaller but more populous south”. [2a](p1)

US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices, 8 March 2006, states that: “In 2003 the political parties signed the French-brokered Linas - Marcoussis Accord (Marcoussis Accord), agreeing to a power - sharing government with rebel representatives. The government made little progress on the implementation of the Marcoussis Accord, and the NF suspended its participation in the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program. In February 2004 UN Resolution 1528 approved the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) deployment of six thousand peacekeeping troops, joining the French Licorne force of four thousand. President Gbagbo and opposition political leaders signed subsequent peace accords, including Accra III (July 2004), the Pretoria Agreement (April 6, 2005), and Pretoria II (June 29, 2005), but the political process remained stalled. By the end of September, little work had been completed to prepare for the scheduled October 30 elections, and disarmament of the NF had not begun. On October 6, the African Union (AU) extended Gbagbo's term in office by up to one year and called for a new prime minister. On

December 4, the AU designated Charles Konan Banny, a PDCI member and governor of the West African Central Bank, as the new prime minister. Civilian authorities in government- and NF- controlled zones generally did not maintain effective control of the security forces.” [2a](p1)

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ECONOMY

GDP: US\$ 16.57 billion (2005 est.)

GDP real growth rate: 1% (2005 est.)

Annual Growth: 11.7 percent (2005 estimate)

Industries: foodstuffs, beverages; wood products, oil refining, truck and bus assembly, textiles, fertilizer, building materials, electricity, ship construction and repair.

Exports - partners: France 18.3%, US 14.1%, Netherlands 11%, Nigeria 8%, Panama 4.4% (2005).

Exchange rates: Communauté Financière Africaine francs (XOF) per US dollar - 527.47 (2005), 528.29 (2004), 581.2 (2003), 696.99 (2002), 733.04 (2001). [1]

President Yudhoyono has highlighted the need to lift economic growth and investment in order to create jobs as key priorities. The administration's other priority is to stamp out corruption, which significantly raises producers' costs and deters investment. (Department of International Development, Country Profile, 30 October 2006) [4a]

Central Intelligence Agency, CIA, accessed 6 November 2006, states that: “Cote d'Ivoire is among the world's largest producers and exporters of coffee, cocoa beans, and palm oil. Consequently, the economy is highly sensitive to fluctuations in international prices for these products and weather conditions. Despite government attempts to diversify the economy, it is still heavily dependent on agriculture and related activities, engaging roughly 68% of the population. Growth was negative in 2000-03 because of the difficulty of meeting the conditions of international donors, continued low prices of key exports, and severe civil war. In November 2004, the situation deteriorated when President GBAGBO's troops attacked and killed nine French peacekeeping forces, and the UN imposed an arms embargo. Political turmoil damaged the economy in 2005, with fear among Ivorians spreading, foreign investment shriveling, French businesses and expats fleeing, travel within the country falling, and criminal elements that traffic in weapons and diamonds gaining ground. The government will continue to survive financially off of the sale of cocoa, which represents 90% of foreign exchange earnings. Though the 2005 harvest was largely unaffected by past fighting, the government will likely lose between 10% and 20% of its cocoa harvest to northern rebels, who smuggle the cocoa they control to neighboring countries where cocoa prices are higher. The government remains hopeful that ongoing exploration of Cote d'Ivoire's offshore oil reserves will result in significant production that could boost daily crude output from roughly 33,000 barrels per day (b/d) to over 200,000 b/d by the end of the decade.” [1]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

US Department of State report on Human Rights Practices, 8 March 2006, states that: “The government's human rights record remained poor. The continuing political instability and uncertainty leading up to the end of President Gbagbo's mandate increased tensions throughout the country. The following human rights problems were reported:

- restriction of citizens' right to change their government
- arbitrary and unlawful killings by security forces, progovernment militias, and student groups
- disappearances
- torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment by security forces and progovernment militias and a student group
- deplorable prison and detention center conditions
- security force impunity
- arbitrary arrest and detention
- denial of fair public trial
- arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence
- police harassment and abuse of noncitizen Africans
- use of excessive force and other abuses in internal conflicts
 - restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, peaceful assembly, association, and movement
- corruption
- discrimination and violence against women
- female genital mutilation (FGM)
- child abuse and exploitation
- trafficking in persons
- forced labor, including by children
- child labor, including hazardous labor

The NF's human rights record is extremely poor. Rebels in the north summarily executed persons, killed civilians, arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, and conducted arbitrary *ad hoc* justice. However, unlike in the previous year, the NF allowed citizens access to news aired in the south and improved freedom of movement. There were fewer reports of the enrollment of child soldiers, and many were released. Unlike in the previous year [2004], no mass graves were found in rebel-held territory." [2a](p1)

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Index to key source documents

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	[2a]	US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 200: Ivory Coast, 15 September 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61565.htm (Date accessed 23 November 2006)
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(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)		
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