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U.N. Will Send Peacekeepers to Ivory Coast

By REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS, May 13 (Reuters) — The United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a new peacekeeping mission in the Ivory Coast today with a maximum of 76 military observers to help enforce a fragile cease-fire in the West African nation's eight-month civil war.

With massacres reported daily, the Council's resolution establishes for six months a United Nations mission in Ivory Coast known by the French acronym Minuci. The mission will also include a small number of civilian officials for political, legal, aid and human rights issues.

The military officers are to work with a West African force and the 4,000 French soldiers in the country as well as the Ivory Coast military and rebel militia to give advice and monitor a January cease-fire. The mission would serve for an initial six months, subject to renewal.

Secretary General Kofi Annan had asked for 255 people, including 76 military officers, 85 international and 89 local civilian staff, in addition to United Nations volunteers.

But the United States objected to its one-year price tag of \$27 million and sent the proposal back to the United Nations peacekeeping department to be trimmed.

The compromise resulted in an initial military liaison group of 26 officers with an option to send 50 more, the resolution says. The number of international civilian staff members is not listed, but diplomats said they would be cut by about a third from the original proposal.

"I think it will make an immediate difference to have this U.N. instrument on the ground, even though it isn't a weapon-wielding force itself," the British ambassador, Jeremy Greenstock, said on Monday.

Mr. Greenstock was to lead a Security Council mission to West Africa, beginning on Thursday. But the trip was called off because of intense negotiations on an American-drafted resolution that would lift sanctions against Iraq. It was expected to be rescheduled in June, diplomats said.

A failed coup attempt last September plunged the Ivory Coast into a civil war pitting the government-held south against rebels in the north and west. In the west, fighters from past conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone have become mercenaries for both sides.

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