

Guinea-Bissau army cedes control

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More regional troops are expected in Guinea-Bissau over the coming days

Guinea-Bissau's military junta says it has handed back power, six weeks after staging a coup that derailed presidential elections.

But correspondents say the army remains influential – and the transitional government includes as defence minister one of the coup leaders.

A regional peace force has started deploying to help bring stability.

No elected leader in nearly 40 years of independence has finished their time in office in the tiny West African state.

Handpicked

Under a deal brokered by Ecowas, the West African regional bloc, elections are to be organised in a year and more than 600 peacekeeping troops are to be stationed in the country.

A 27-member cabinet under Prime Minister Rui Duarte Barros includes two army officers.

The defence minister is Colonel Celestino Carvalho, who was one of the putschists, while Musa Diata – a colonel who did not participate in the coup – has been named as junior minister for veteran affairs, the AFP news agency reports.



Correspondents say that the coup leaders also handpicked Interim President Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo.

Faustino Fudut Imbali, a former prime minister, is in charge of foreign affairs.

None of the members of the government ousted in the 12 April returned to the new cabinet, which has agreed to reform the civil service and the security forces.

It will also create a new electoral commission, which will revise the electoral law, local media reports.

Some 70 soldiers from Burkina Faso – the first wave of an Ecomog force – arrived in the country last week – to relieve about 200 Angolan officers who have been in the country for the last year to help with training and reforms to the bloated army.

Last Friday, the UN Security Council imposed a travel ban on five leaders of the recent military coup in Guinea-Bissau – including army chief General Antonio Injai who led the coup.

The army has long meddled in politics and is said by Western intelligence agencies to play a key part in trafficking drugs – Guinea-Bissau is a major staging post for gangs smuggling cocaine from Latin America to Europe.

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