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Ivory Coast violence: Gbagbo allies 'attacked Abidjan'

Fighters loyal to ex-Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo carried out recent attacks in Abidjan, killing 11 soldiers, a minister has said.

Hamed Bakayoko told Radio France International (RFI) he believed the attackers received their orders from Gbagbo loyalists in neighbouring Ghana.

One assailant was also killed in the gun battle on Monday in the Riviera district of Abidjan, the main city.

Ivory Coast is recovering from months of unrest after a disputed poll.

The attacks on Sunday and Monday were said to be the biggest in Abidjan since Mr Gbagbo was ousted in April 2011.

"They [the attackers] were people who come from the myriad pro-Gbagbo militiamen and former armed forces nostalgic of the Gbagbo regime," Mr Bakayoko told RFI.

He believed that "everything was ordered" by pro-Gbagbo militiamen who fled to Ghana after they were ousted from power in Abidjan, RFI reports.

Mr Bakayoko told state TV the army would step up its presence across the country.

'Weapons stolen'

"The orders have been given, our instructions are firm," he said.

"From today, you'll be able to note this by the presence of our men in all the districts of Abidjan as well as towns in the interior."

The BBC's John James in Abidjan says there was a gory scene at the Akouedo military camp, with bodies lying on the ground and blood spattered over the walls after Monday's attack.

Corp Ousmane Kone, who took part in the fighting, told Reuters news agency that the attackers had made off with guns.

"They took lots of weapons, loaded them in a truck and drove off with them. They took AK-47s [automatic rifles], machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades," he said.

The head of the national assembly, Guillaume Soro, said the situation was under control.

"The attackers just want to give the impression that the security situation in Ivory Coast is precarious," he added.

The army is patrolling the areas east of Abidjan looking for the attackers.

UN peacekeepers have been posted at key junctions.

Defence Minister Paul Koffi Koffi had told AFP the Yopougon attack was an apparent bid to free people who had been arrested the previous day.

Yopougon district suffered some of the heaviest fighting during the battle for control of Abidjan last year following the disputed elections.

Although Abidjan has been relatively peaceful recently, there have been outbreaks of unrest, especially in the west of the country, which correspondents say remains awash with guns.

Some 3,000 people were killed in a dispute after the November 2010 poll.

Mr Gbagbo refused to accept defeat to President Alassane Ouattara, who eventually ousted his rival with the help of former rebel forces, the UN and former colonial power France.

Mr Gbagbo is currently in The Hague, awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity.