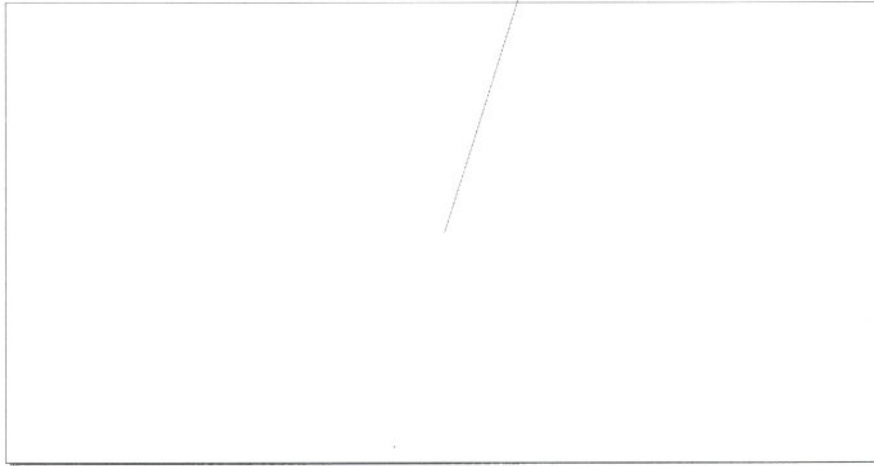


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SERIAL: (U)

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COUNTRY: (U) Cote d'Ivoire (CIV); Morocco (MAR); Algeria (DZA);
South Africa (ZAF); France (FRA); Saudi Arabia (SAU)

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SUBJ: IVOIRIAN NEWSPAPER REPORTS COTE D'IVOIRE AND
MOROCCO ON VERGE OF BREAKING DIPLOMATIC TIES OVER 2004 UN VOTE

(U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED
INTELLIGENCE.

REPORT CLASSIFIED ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOI: 20070117

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SOURCE: (U)//Open Source// Nord-Sud Quotidien. Privately owned
pro-opposition Rally of Republicans daily. Publishes articles
critical of the Gbagbo regime. Date of Source: 20070117. CONTEXT
STATEMENT -- NONE.

SUMMARY: (U) SEE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, TEXT PARAGRAPH 1, BELOW.

TEXT:

1. (U) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. Local Ivoirian newspaper reports relations
between Cote d'Ivoire and Morocco poor since July 2004 UN vote when
Cote d'Ivoire decided to support Morocco's adversaries and supported
the Sarawi separatists of the Polisario Front; newspaper reports
diplomatic relations could break.

(b)(1);Sec. 1.4(c)

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(b)(1);Sec. 1.4(c)

3. (U) Source reported Cote d'Ivoire violated a historical pact with Morocco by voting in favor of Polisario at the United Nations and cited South African President Thabo Mbeki as instigator. By breaking with a tradition that dated back more than 30 years, Cote d'Ivoire decided to support Morocco's adversaries and support the Sarawi separatists of the Polisario Front.

4. (U) The Ivoirian Ambassador to the United Nations at the time, M. Philippe (Djangone-Bi), voted in favor of a text presented by Algeria during the meeting of the UN General Assembly on 14 July 2004, calling for the organization of a referendum on the self-determination of Western Sahara. (At the time, the United Nations and Morocco were looking for a way to gain acceptance for a plan on the autonomy for this territory which, for decades, had been recognized by the International Court of Justice as an integral part of the Kingdom of Morocco.)

5. (U) According to sources in the Ivoirian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the current diplomatic role started with the activism of South African President Thabo Mbeki, who, during the meeting of the Peace and Security Council (CPS) of the AU in Addis Ababa on 29 November 2006, mounted a deal between Presidents (Gbagbo) and (Bouteflika) of Algeria. Algeria, a member of the CPS, defended Gbagbo's positions in the Ivoirian conflict, supported his struggle as that of a nationalist against the imperialists, and fought against any attack of the Ivoirian constitution and against any limitation of the powers of the Ivoirian president.

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President Mbeki undertook in convincing all the other heads of state who were members of the CPS, not to weaken Gbagbo before France.

6. (U) In compensation, Gbagbo must ensure the Ivoirian ambassador to the United Nations voted in favor of the text presented by Algeria on the Western Saharan issue. This vote was important to Algeria because if the principle of referendum was obtained, it could enable the thousands of Sarawi refugees living in the Tindouf camp to vote and, as a result, obtain the independence of Western Sahara as well as international recognition for the micro-state known as the Sarawi Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR).

7. (U) South Africa broke diplomatic relations with Morocco in 2004, when it officially recognized the existence, and established diplomatic relations, with SDAR. There was an old hatred between the

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ANC and Morocco that dated from 1962 when Nelson ((Mandela)) toured the Maghreb region. He was received in Tunis by President ((Bourguiba)), in Algeria by Ahmed ((Ben Bella)), but nobody received him in Morocco, not even ((King Hassan)) II or any other Moroccan official. Mandela had a bitter memory of this incident. At the beginning of the 1980's, when Morocco waged war against the Polisario Front, militarily supported by Algeria, it was in apartheid South Africa that Morocco secretly purchased its Panhard armored vehicles. To the ANC, whose leader was imprisoned by the ruling apartheid regime, Morocco and the oppressive regime that they were fighting were one in the same.

8. (U) The first thing that Nelson Mandela did after leaving prison in 1994 was to issue a decree officially recognizing the SDAR. Pressure from the United States, France, and Saudi Arabia made him later back away from this position, but his successor, Thabo Mbeki, never gave up making Morocco pay for its relations with the apartheid regime the ANC fought. In the Cote d'Ivoire/Morocco case, Mbeki found another opportunity to further weaken Morocco.

9. (U) In July 2004, Ivorian Foreign Minister Youssouf ((Bakayoko)) assured Morocco of a vote that would not favor the Algerians. But the minister did not know Gbagbo gave secret instructions to Ambassador Djangone-Bi to the contrary. With the Ivoirian vote, the first reaction of ((King Mohamed)) VI was to order the closure of the Moroccan Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire, end cooperation between the two countries, (several Ivorian students had scholarships from the Moroccan State), and withdraw the Moroccan contingent from ONUCI. This last threat was the real occasion for Thabo Mbeki to get involved in the Ivorian crisis so he could send South African troops to replace the Moroccans and strengthen his own position in international mediations. Other countries understood this and dissuaded the Moroccan king from executing his threats. (Field Comment. The Moroccan Embassy in Abidjan remained open and the Moroccans assigned to ONUCI were not withdrawn.)

10. (U) Source indicated since the 2004 UN vote, relations between Cote d'Ivoire and Morocco had been at their lowest and no action was taken to improve them.

COMMENTS: (Embassy Comments) 1: (C) AMEMB ABIDJAN
Comment. There was a diplomatic incident between Morocco and Cote d'Ivoire in February 2005. President Gbagbo sent a delegation led by FPI Vice President Abdou Draman ((Sangare)), to meet with ((King Mohamed VI)) to ask him to take on the role of mediator in the Cote d'Ivoire crisis. Apparently the Ivoirians thought the meeting was supposed to be secret, but the Moroccan Foreign Ministry issued a communique reporting that it had taken place. This was quickly picked up by the French press, questioning whether it meant that Gbagbo had lost confidence in South African President Mbeki as mediator. The following day Gbagbo's press spokesman denied that the delegation had asked King Mohamed VI to act as mediator. The same

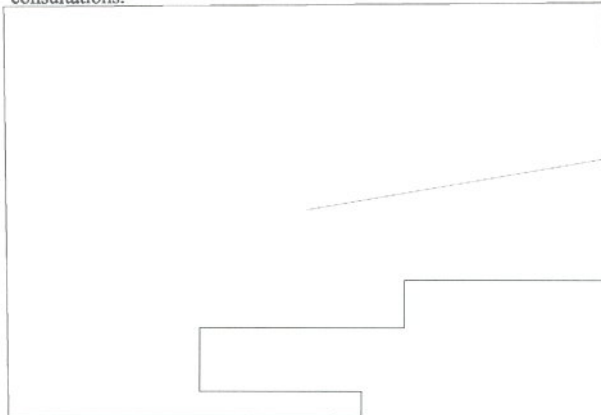
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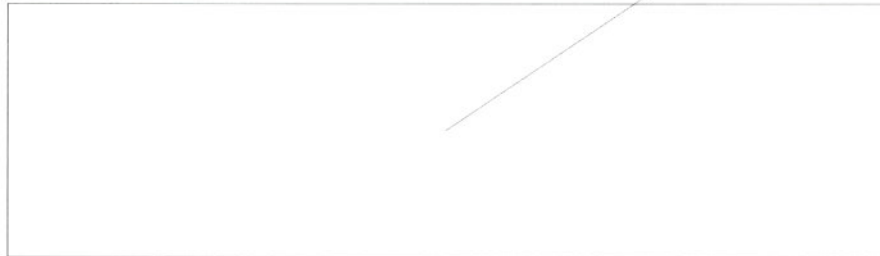
day, the Moroccan Foreign Ministry issued another communique expressing astonishment at this denial, and indicating that Morocco was deeply offended at the embarrassment this incident had caused to the King. The same day Morocco briefly recalled its Ambassador for consultations.



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