

Ivory Coast Rebels Become Part of Cabinet

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ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, April 17 -- The country's new unity government held its first cabinet meeting with newly sworn-in rebel ministers today, even as the rebels accused the government of new attacks.

The new government includes members of the ruling party, the political opposition and rebels. The coalition was formed out of French-brokered peace accords in January aimed at ending six months of civil war in a country that had long been seen as a symbol of stability in Africa.

Rebel officials emerged smiling from the closed meeting, held here in the country's commercial capital, "We are going to live together and build peace," said Patrick Achi, a spokesman for the new government.

But the goodwill was marred by reports of continued violence.

A rebel spokesman, Antoine Beugre, claimed that government-sponsored helicopter attacks killed 28 people over the past 10 days and injured almost 100 others, many of them civilians.

France confirmed the attacks and condemned them. France has 3,000 troops monitoring the cease-fire lines with West African peacekeepers.

In Paris, a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry, Francois Rivasseau called the most recent attack Wednesday in Vavoua an "unjustifiable aggression" and "an attack on the process of returning to peace."

The humanitarian group Medecins Sans Frontieres, [Doctors Without Borders], treated about 50 wounded civilians in the western city of Man on Tuesday, according to its Web site.