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Two Rebel Groups in Ivory Coast Sign Truce With French Troops

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan. 8 — Two rebel groups based in western Ivory Coast signed a truce today with French troops deployed here to prevent fighting and said they would attend peace talks planned for next week in Paris.

The rebels stressed, however, that they would continue fighting government forces. The civil war has split Ivory Coast and led to serious clashes involving the French soldiers.

"We have signed the cessation of hostilities with France but not with the government forces," said Guillaume Gbato, a spokesman for the Popular Movement of Ivory Coast's Far West.

The allied Movement for Justice and Peace also signed the cease-fire during talks with the French ambassador, whose government has deployed peacekeeping troops in the former colony, Mr. Gbato added.

He said the two parties had told the ambassador they would attend the talks in Paris, starting Jan. 15.

But Mr. Gbato said his party "intended always to progress" and make fresh inroads into the government-held southern half of Ivory Coast, but by circumventing soldiers that France has deployed to separate the warring parties.

The French ambassador, Gildas Le Lidec, accompanied by Gen. Emmanuel Beth, the head of the French forces in Ivory Coast, met the rebels in Duékoué, where French troops have been positioned.

Fierce fighting broke out Monday between the French and armed rebels who attacked Duékoué. The battle left 30 insurgents dead and 9 French soldiers wounded, one seriously.

The French are trying to enforce a truce signed by the government and the main rebel group on Oct. 17, almost a month into the conflict. They are also trying to protect foreigners.

In all, France has some 2,500 troops deployed. They have been joined recently by the first contingents of a regional peacekeeping force, to be led by Senegal.

Ambassador Le Lidec held talks with Félix Doh, the operational head of the Popular Movement, and Gaspard Déli, from the Movement for Justice and Peace.

Both the Patriotic Movement and the government promised France last week that they would observe an often violated cease-fire.

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