

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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Subject: FW: Battle rages in Ivory Coast, UN fires on Gbagbo bases (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
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Subject: Battle rages in Ivory Coast, UN fires on Gbagbo bases (Reuters)

ABIDJAN, April 4 (Reuters) - U.N. and French helicopters attacked Laurent Gbagbo's last strongholds in Abidjan on Monday as forces loyal to Ivory Coast presidential claimant Alassane Ouattara streamed into the city in a "final assault".

Explosions and gunfire rang out from the direction of the Presidential Palace, the state broadcaster RTI, and one of two bridges connecting the lagoon-side city to the airport -- among the last strategic footholds held by the incumbent leader who has refused to step down since a November election.

Attack helicopters commanded by the United Nations mission in the West African country fired missiles at Gbagbo's military bases, and near his official residence, causing huge explosions that shook nearby homes and smashed windows, witnesses said.

A spokesman for Ouattara's government later said pro-Ouattara forces seized Gbagbo's residence, situated in the leafy Cocody neighbourhood, but the information could not independently confirmed and a pro-Gbagbo military source who asked not to be named denied it.

"They are in control. But if (Gbagbo's) there or not I don't know," spokesman Patrick Achi told Reuters by phone.

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