Guinea: Background and Relations with the United States

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Summary

Guinea, a former French colony on West Africa’s Atlantic coast with a population of about 10 million, is rich in natural resources, but its citizens are afflicted by widespread poverty. The past four years have seen a series of dramatic political changes for a country that had previously had only two presidents in the first 50 years after independence in 1958. In late 2008, a military junta took power following the death of longtime president Lansana Conté. Amid growing popular opposition to the junta’s rule, the military violently cracked down on peaceful protests in September 2009, sparking widespread condemnation and increased international isolation. Two months later, junta leader Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara was shot and wounded by his own bodyguard, and his departure paved the way for a military-led transitional government.

In 2010, Guineans voted in their country’s first presidential elections organized by an independent electoral commission and without an incumbent candidate. Longtime opposition leader in exile Alpha Condé, who had never served in government, was declared the winner. Condé’s inauguration brought an end to two years of military rule and could potentially enable political and economic reforms viewed as prerequisites for private sector growth and increased respect for human rights. Yet political, security, and socioeconomic challenges remain stark. The authority and capacity of state institutions remain badly eroded, the underlying causes of military involvement in politics and the economy have not been fully addressed, and Condé has been accused by opposition parties of attempting to delay and manipulate planned legislative elections.

International policy makers view Guinea as central to preserving security gains in neighboring Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d’Ivoire, whose populations have numerous cross-border links with Guinea. While Guinea has experienced regular episodes of internal political turmoil since independence in 1958, it has been considered a locus of relative stability during much of the past 25 years, during which time each of its six neighbors suffered armed internal conflicts. Since the military coup of 2008, however, Guinea has been seen as a potential vector of insecurity, particularly as its role as a hub in the transnational narcotics trade has grown.

U.S. engagement in Guinea has focused on democratization and good governance; counternarcotics issues; security sector reform; regional peace and stability; U.S. investment issues; and socioeconomic and institutional development. Following the 2008 military coup, the United States identified Guinea’s political transition as a key policy goal in West Africa and made significant financial and diplomatic contributions toward the success of Guinea’s election process. Selective U.S. bilateral aid restrictions, which were imposed in connection with the coup, have been lifted in the wake of the successful transfer of power to a civilian-led administration. Congress may play a role in guiding U.S. engagement with Guinea through the authorization, appropriation, and oversight of U.S. programs and policies.

The FY2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-74) continues restrictions, contained in previous annual appropriations bills, on Guinea’s ability to receive certain forms of State Department-administered security assistance. The FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-81) authorizes Guinea, among several West African countries, to receive Defense Department-administered counter-narcotics assistance. Guinea-focused legislation introduced during the 111th Congress included H.Res. 1013 (Ros-Lehtinen) and S.Res. 345 (Boxer).
Contents

Overview.......................................................................................................................................... 1
  Background................................................................................................................................. 2
The Economy................................................................................................................................... 4
Current Issues .............................................................................................................................. 5
  Political Tensions and Fears of Instability.................................................................................. 5
  The Role of the Military............................................................................................................... 6
  Governance and Human Rights.................................................................................................... 6
  The Mining Sector....................................................................................................................... 7
  Drug Trafficking......................................................................................................................... 8
Foreign Relations.......................................................................................................................... 9
U.S. Relations ............................................................................................................................ 9
  Selected Congressional Actions.................................................................................................... 10
  U.S. Assistance........................................................................................................................... 11
Outlook .......................................................................................................................................... 12

Tables

Table 1. Bilateral Foreign Assistance by Account ........................................................................... 12

Contacts

Author Contact Information............................................................................................................ 13
Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................................... 13
Overview

Guinea is a former French colony in West Africa, about the size of Oregon, which has experienced regular episodes of political turmoil. Poor governance, corruption, weak or nonexistent infrastructure, and other factors have prevented its population from benefiting from rich natural resource endowments. Guinea’s development indicators are poor even by regional standards, and living conditions are among the worst in the world.1

During much of the past two decades, Guinea was considered a locus of relative stability in a region that has witnessed multiple armed conflicts. However, in recent years Guinea has been increasingly viewed as a potential vector of instability, as it has struggled with a fractious military, political unrest, ethnic tensions, poorly policed borders, endemic corruption, and weak state institutions. A reported hub for transnational narcotics trafficking and other forms of regional organized crime, Guinea is also vulnerable to threats such as terrorist financing and maritime piracy.

President Alpha Condé, who came to power in 2010 through what many view as Guinea’s first ever free elections, faces tremendous expectations from Guinea’s impoverished population, as well as vast challenges to meeting those hopes. His inauguration brought an end to two years of military rule and, many hope, to over 50 years of authoritarianism. Legislative elections, however, have been repeatedly delayed, worsening the level of distrust among political factions. The root causes of the military’s overweening role in politics and the economy have not been fully addressed, and efforts to do so could potentially cause greater instability in the short-run. State institutions, such as the justice sector and civilian bureaucracy, are in disarray. The pre- and post-electoral periods were marred by violence, some of it ethnically tinged, which revealed latent tensions and damaged the social fabric in ethnically mixed areas. Guinea’s economy, already weak, has been severely impacted by instability, swings in global mineral commodity prices, and the 2008-2010 suspension of international financial institution assistance.

Condé has identified security sector reform, mining sector reform, agricultural development, countering corruption, and “national reconciliation” as among his policy priorities. While these goals are generally viewed as laudatory, the capacity and political will of Condé’s administration to pursue them are uncertain. Many Guineans interpret Condé’s record through an ethnically colored lens, with members of the president’s Malinké community (about 30% of the population) more likely to view his administration positively, whereas some ethnic Fulbe (about 40%)—the group to which his primary electoral rival belonged—see the president as seeking to install an

authoritarian regime that excludes them from political participation. Ethnic tensions were salient during the 2010 electoral campaign (see “Background,” below). The issue of accountability for Guinea’s troubled past is also potentially ethnically divisive. Condé appears recently to have backed away from his campaign promise of a broad “truth and reconciliation” process.

The United States played a key role in Guinea’s political transition by isolating the military junta that came to power in 2008 and providing diplomatic and financial support to the electoral process that led to the 2010 election. Future support for Guinea’s democratic and socio-economic development is likely to be weighed against competing priorities. Congress may guide U.S. engagement with Guinea through its authorization and appropriation of foreign assistance and its oversight of executive branch policies and programs.

Issues of potential interest to Congress may include:

- U.S. foreign aid programs;
- Guinea’s democratic trajectory and prospects for institutional reforms;
- the role of Guinea’s military and prospects for security sector reform;
- counter-narcotics and transnational organized crime;
- Guinea’s natural resource wealth and related U.S. investments; and
- Guinea’s potential impact on regional stability.

**Background**

For 26 years following independence from France in 1958, Guinea was ruled as a one-party “revolutionary” state under the charismatic but repressive leadership of Ahmed Sékou Touré, an icon of African independence and nationalist movements. Following Touré’s death in 1984, President Lansana Conté came to power in a military coup d’état. Conté oversaw some economic and political reforms, but his critics accused him of stifling Guinea’s democratic development while allowing corruption and nepotism to flourish. The final years of Conté’s rule were marked by a decline in average living standards, competition for influence among members of the senior bureaucracy and business elite, the disintegration of state institutions, and growing signs of public dissatisfaction. Divisions and unrest within the sprawling armed forces, at once relied on and mistrusted by Conté, also grew. International concerns heightened with reports that transnational

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**Guinea at a Glance**

*Population:* 10.9 million  
*GDP Per Capita:* $452 (2010)  
*GDP Growth:* 4% (2011 est.)  
*Ethnic Groups:* Peul (Fulbe/Fulani) 40%, Malinké (Mandingo) 30%, Soussou 20%, other 10%  
*Religions:* Muslim 85%; Christian 8%; indigenous beliefs  
*Languages:* French (official); local languages  
*Life Expectancy at Birth:* 58.6 years  
*HIV/AIDS Adult Prevalence:* 1.3% (2009)  
*Adult Literacy:* 39% (2009)  
*Age Structure:* 0-14 years 42.5%, 15-64 years 54%, 65+ years 3.5%  
*Resources:* bauxite [aluminum ore], iron ore, diamonds, gold, uranium, hydropower, fish, agricultural products  
*Major Trading Partners:* India, China, Spain, Netherlands, Chile, France, Russia, Ireland, Ukraine, United States, Denmark, Germany  
*Sources:* CIA World Factbook; World Bank
cocaine trafficking was being facilitated or directly undertaken by government officials, military officers, and Conté associates.

Conté died in December 2008 following a long illness, and a military junta, the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), seized power. The CNDD appointed as president a previously little-known military officer, Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara, who initially committed to overseeing free and fair elections and a transition to civilian rule within a year. However, elections were repeatedly postponed, and Dadis Camara started to indicate that he might choose to run for president. Divisions within the CNDD and the military at large grew increasingly apparent. On September 28, 2009, security forces opened fire on tens of thousands of peaceful democracy protesters, killing at least 150, and assaulted and threatened opposition leaders. According to numerous reports, soldiers also sexually abused dozens of women, sometimes in full view of military commanders. In the days following the protests, lootings and abuses by troops and purported irregular militias continued. A United Nations (U.N.) commission of inquiry concluded that the crackdown may have constituted crimes against humanity and recommended a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC). In October, the chief prosecutor for the ICC announced he was opening a “preliminary examination.”

Rising tensions within the junta over who would be targeted in the ICC inquiry came to a head in early December 2009, when Capt. Dadis Camara was shot in the head by a commander in his presidential guard. Dadis Camara was evacuated to Morocco to receive medical care; he subsequently traveled to Burkina Faso, where he remains in exile. International and regional alarm over the deteriorating situation led to an agreement in early 2010, backed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), that the CNDD’s Defense Minister, Gen. Sekouba Konaté, would assume executive powers, form a unity government with the civilian opposition, and hold elections within six months. A new constitution and electoral code were drafted by a quasi-legislative National Transitional Council (CNT) and promulgated by presidential decree. Using a combination of patronage and force, Konaté consolidated power within the military and closed down militia training camps.

Presidential elections were held as scheduled in June 2010. The vote was historically significant because it was the first national election in Guinea’s history organized by an independent commission, and the first not to feature an incumbent government candidate. International and domestic election monitoring groups largely praised the vote as an important step, while noting severe logistical challenges and criticizing a Supreme Court decision to nullify a large number of votes cast in major population centers. No candidate won more than 50% of the vote, necessitating a runoff election between Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) party, and Alpha Condé of the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party.

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2 A Human Rights Watch investigation concluded that the crackdown was “premeditated” and that soldiers and gendarmes—including members of the Presidential Guard and of the CNDD’s anti-drug and anti-crime unit, both of which ostensibly answered to the presidency—had directly fired on the stadium crowd and stabbed those fleeing with knives and bayonets. Human Rights Watch (HRW), Bloody Monday: The September 28 Massacre and Rapes by Security Forces in Guinea, December 2009.


4 ICC Office of the Prosecutor, “ICC Prosecutor Confirms Situation in Guinea Under Examination,” October 14, 2009. The ICC has never advanced to a full investigation in Guinea, but continues to observe developments there.

5 The Carter Center, “Guinea’s Transitional Elections Marked by Peaceful Voting; Commitment to Transparency in Final Results Is Important [Preliminary Statement],” November 9, 2010.
Condé was a longtime opposition leader who had lived in exile during most of Guinea’s post-independence history, while Diallo was a former prime minister seen as a political and business insider. The vote was nevertheless perceived by many as a contest between Guinea’s two largest ethnic groups: the Peul (Fulbe/Fulani), who were seen as constituting Diallo’s base, and the Malinké (Mandingo), seen as Condé’s stronghold.

A runoff was held in November 2010 after numerous delays, and Alpha Condé was pronounced the winner with 52.5% of the vote. Condé received cross-ethnic support, in part because he appears to have benefitted from other groups’ fears of political consolidation by the already economically influential Fulbe. International observers were largely positive regarding the conduct of the vote. However, the lead-up to the poll was marked by growing ethnic tensions, repeated flares of communal violence, and ethnically based displacements. A new round of violence accompanied the announcement of Condé’s victory, this time with security forces reportedly joining in attacks on communities perceived as having supported Diallo. These social and ethnic tensions left scars that could drive future political dynamics.

President Alpha Condé

Prior to his election in 2010, Alpha Condé, 74, had spent most of the past forty years in exile, largely in France where he was a law professor. He founded the Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen (Rally of the Guinean People, RPG)—Guinea’s first registered opposition party—in the early 1990s, and unsuccessfully ran against then-President Lansana Conté in 1993 (Guinea’s first multi-party vote) and 1998. Both elections were marred by irregularities and reported fraud. Following the 1998 election, Condé was imprisoned for trying to leave the country “illegally” and attempting to overthrow the government. He was released in 2001 on a presidential pardon. Condé and the RPG boycotted the 2002 legislative election and the 2003 presidential election. Condé is a member of the Malinké (Mande) ethnic group, which is concentrated in Guinea’s northeast and is thought to constitute the president’s base; Condé also drew cross-ethnic support during the presidential campaign, notably from the Soussou and Forestier ethnic communities.

The Economy

Guinea boasts bountiful natural resources, including up to a half of global reserves of bauxite (aluminum ore); sizable deposits of high-grade iron ore, diamonds, gold, and uranium; and possible offshore oil and gas reserves. It also has significant hydro-electric and commercial agricultural potential. The economy relies heavily on mineral exports; joint-venture bauxite mining and alumina operations have historically provided about 80% of Guinea’s foreign exchange. Between 2008 and 2011, the global economic recession (which severely impacted mineral commodity prices), political instability, and the government’s erratic governance of the mining sector have negatively affected Guinea’s mining output and caused major investment projects to be delayed or canceled. As of early 2012, Guinea appeared to be enjoying a slight economic recovery amid increased investor interest, but the overall picture remains mixed. In early 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised Guinea’s progress toward greater macroeconomic stability, but noted that inflation remained high, that central bank governance needed to be improved, and that renewed political or social unrest could threaten growth.

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7 State Department, “Background Note: Guinea,” updated November 4, 2011. The Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinea (CBG), for example, is a joint venture in which 49% of the shares are owned by the Guinean Government and 51% by an international consortium led by Alcoa and Rio Tinto-Alcan.
8 “IMF Executive Board Approves Three-Year, US$198.9 Million Extended Credit Facility Arrangement and Additional Interim HIPC Assistance for Guinea,” February 24, 2012; “IMF Executive Board Concludes 2011 Article (continued...)”
While Guinea’s economic potential is considerable, over three-quarters of the workforce is employed in (largely subsistence) agriculture and poverty is widespread. Guinea’s living standards are among the world’s worst, and economic hardship has periodically contributed to popular unrest. Limited infrastructure, corruption, a history of poor macroeconomic management, periodic labor unrest, and political instability are considered to pose barriers to long-term growth. Reports suggest that government finances have been depleted in recent years due to corruption and mismanagement, a drop in the collection of import duties, declining global mineral commodity prices, a near-doubling in civil service rolls between 2006 and 2011, misguided monetary policy, and the 2008-2010 freezing of most donor budgetary support after the military coup. When Alpha Condé became president, he alleged that the CNDD junta had depleted state coffers.\(^9\) Guinea’s external debt burden—$2 billion in 2010 according to the World Bank—is also considerable, and Guinea is in arrears to some creditors. Prior to 2008, Guinea had been on track to eventually receive multilateral debt relief under the World Bank and IMF-administered Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative; reaching the HIPC “completion point” is a major focus of economic and diplomatic policy under President Condé.

**Current Issues**

**Political Tensions and Fears of Instability**

President Condé continues to consolidate power, but his administration appears to remain fragile. Opposition figures, meanwhile, have accused the president of autocratic tendencies and ethnic bias, with Condé’s electoral opponent, Cellou Dalein Diallo, warning in September 2011 that harassment of opposition activists and Condé’s decision to replace some elected local government officials with ruling party representatives constituted “a real risk of instability.”\(^10\) Disagreements regarding the timeline and conduct of legislative elections have created significant political tensions, including recent protests in Conakry. There is currently no elected legislature in Guinea; the parliament was dissolved in 2008, and a 155-person Transitional National Council (CNT) assembled under the 2010 transitional government fulfills basic legislative functions. Legislative elections were supposed to take place soon after the 2010 presidential elections, but have been repeatedly delayed due to disputes between the government and opposition over the status of the voter registry, the composition of the national election commission, and the role of the interior ministry in election administration. These delays have denied the 47% of the electorate who voted for Condé’s opponent in 2010 the opportunity to be represented in government.

Concerns over stability were reignited with an armed attack on President Condé’s residence on July 19, 2011, following which several senior military officers—most linked to Condé’s predecessor, Gen. Konaté—were arrested, along with dozens of other soldiers and civilians. The president subsequently accused a prominent opposition figure, along with a former government minister and a businessman, of plotting the attack from neighboring Senegal.\(^11\) The assailants’

\(^11\) IHS Global Insight, “Guinean President Claims Failed Assassination Plotted with Complicity of Senegal and (continued...)"
ultimate aims and whether or not they were plotting a coup are disputed. Government officials stated that the attack was motivated by resentment of Condé’s attempts to stem corruption within the senior command and among civilian military contractors, while some analysts pointed to the non-delivery of a promised doubling of military salaries.12 Some of Condé’s critics, meanwhile, have questioned the official account of events and suggested that it may have been a pretext to eliminate certain military figures and/or intimidate the opposition.

The Role of the Military

Alpha Condé has pledged to prioritize security sector reform (SSR), and indeed, nearly all observers point to Guinea’s bloated and undisciplined military as a central cause of political instability. Key challenges include a lack of civilian control and oversight; a disproportionate size (Guinea’s armed forces, estimated at over 45,000 personnel in 2010, are among the region’s largest); an undefined mandate; and the incomplete integration of irregular recruits.13 The military has been implicated in high-level corruption, multiple coup attempts, mutinies, and gross human rights abuses, including the violence of September 2009 (see “Background,” above) and the shooting of unarmed demonstrators in early 2007. Soldiers and commanders are perceived as benefiting from near-complete impunity from judicial sanction; moreover, the officer corps has been granted repeated mass promotions in recent years designed, in part, to stave off revolt. According to the government, military expenditures represent nearly 10% of GDP, and analysts note that military contractors benefit from political protection and other insider privileges.14 This reflects the armed forces’ role as a vehicle for patronage, although military salaries and benefits also act as a safety net for a deeply impoverished population.

The CNDD coup in 2008 appeared to contribute to the deterioration of discipline and to divisions within the military along ethnic, generational, and factional lines. While many credit transitional president Konaté and President Condé with improving military discipline, the potential for abuses remains high. Some contend that a broad-based truth and reconciliation process is needed to address public perceptions of the armed forces and allegations of abuses stretching back to the post-colonial period. However, efforts by civil society groups to push for official investigations into crimes and human rights abuses by members of the military have had limited effects.

Governance and Human Rights

Having been governed by authoritarian regimes since independence, Guinea has never experienced the effective rule of law. It is among the world’s most corrupt countries, ranking 164

(...continued)

Gambia,” September 12, 2011. Amadou Oury Bah, the opposition official of the UFDG party, and Tibou Camara, the former minister, denied any involvement. CRS interview with Amadou Oury Bah, Washington DC, September 2011; Aminata.com, “Tibou Kamara—‘Alpha Condé est devenu un danger pour la Guinée et pour la région,’” September 19, 2011. Senegal also denied involvement or prior knowledge of the plot.


out of 182 countries assessed on Transparency International’s 2010 *Corruption Perceptions Index* (tying with Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, and Yemen). Judicial and law enforcement capacity is low and is further compromised by corruption and political interference. According to a November 2011 report by international and Guinean advocacy groups, security forces “still regularly use torture and cruel treatments... toward suspects under common law, prisoners, people considered to be political opposition sympathizers, and soldiers accused of plotting against the government.”

Despite the appointment in 2010 of an investigative panel into the September 28, 2009, military crackdown, progress has been slow. Two military commanders named in the U.N. inquiry into the violence appear to retain government posts, although one was recently questioned and charged in the case. In September 2011, the government denied victims’ groups permission to hold a public event to mark the anniversary of the killings, and security forces reportedly violently harassed and detained a number of opposition supporters who held public gatherings that day.

According to the State Department, major human rights problems include:

- the use of excessive force by security forces resulting in civilian deaths and injuries;
- vigilante killings and ethno-religious violence;
- torture and abuse of prisoners, including rape;
- inhumane and life-threatening prison conditions;
- arbitrary arrests;
- prolonged pretrial detention;
- incommunicado detention;
- lack of judicial independence;
- official corruption;
- restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement;
- attacks on human rights workers;
- sexual violence against women and girls;
- societal discrimination against women;
- and female genital mutilation (FGM)... [as well as] ethnically based harassment by civilian supporters of opposition political parties... [and] trafficking in persons, ethnic discrimination, and forced labor, including by children.

### The Mining Sector

Guinea’s economy and state budget are highly depending on the mining sector. Corruption and underperformance in the sector have long been abetted by a lack of transparency in mining contracts, while mining companies complain of erratic government oversight and regulatory uncertainty. In 2009, unpredictable actions by Capt. Dadis Camara, who publicly threatened to close or nationalize various mining projects, sparked fears among international investors. A number of new mining agreements were then signed in the first half of 2010, during the transitional government, while previous ambiguities regarding the security of contract went...

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15 The State Department’s 2010 Human Rights Report states that the “judicial system lacked independence and was underfunded, inefficient, and overtly corrupt. Budget shortfalls, a shortage of qualified lawyers and magistrates, and an outdated and restrictive penal code limited the judiciary's effectiveness. The government largely ignored the judiciary.”


17 They are Claude Pivi, in charge of presidential security, and Moussa Tiegboro Camara, in charge of a counter-narcotics and organized crime squad. Both were appointed under President Dadis Camara. Tiegboro Camara was criminally charged in February 2011 but appears to be at liberty. In a public appearance in July 2011, Condé indicated that Pivi and Tiegboro were not cabinet ministers, and had been retained in the interest of stability; he added, “I am a head of state, not president of a human rights organization.” Alpha Condé appearance at the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Washington DC, August 1, 2011, attended by CRS. The whereabouts of Aboubacar Sidiki Diakité, also named in the U.N. inquiry, have been unknown since he shot Dadis Camara in December 2009.


largely unresolved. The 2010 deals were, in turn, criticized by some Guinean politicians and civil society groups who contended that the terms were opaque and that the transitional government did not have the right to conclude significant sovereign agreements prior to elections.

President Condé has identified mining sector reform as a priority, and in September 2011 his administration promulgated a new mining code, drafted with international assistance.\(^2\) The code, which Condé has described as a “win-win” for investors and Guinea,\(^1\) requires a no-cost 15% ownership stake for the Guinean government in all mining projects, with the option to acquire an additional 20%; requires that preference be given to Guinean sub-contractors and employees; introduces new procedures for obtaining mining permits; and raises taxes on mineral exports; among its extensive provisions.\(^2\) A newly created “technical committee” plans to review all mining contracts in light of the new law, negotiate new agreements with firms deemed to be non-compliant, and revoke “inactive” mining rights.\(^2\) The government might also audit the finances of mining companies. Industry reactions to the new law have varied between strident criticism and a wait-and-see attitude; the new legal provisions and contract review have yet to be implemented, amid reported efforts by firms to push for changes to the code. The implementation process may succeed in mollifying investors if it is conducted quickly, fairly, and transparently, while offering greater security of contract in return for possible financial losses from settlement fees or increased government ownership. Yet this outcome is far from certain.

In the meantime, disputes continue regarding the status of an aluminum refinery purchased in 2006 by the Russia-based aluminum producer RusAl, and regarding the status of a concession acquired in 2008 by BSG Resources Guinea, a subsidiary controlled by Israeli businessman Benny Steinmetz—and now subject to a joint venture with the Brazilian mining company Vale. President Condé annulled a controversial and massive 2009 mining-and-infrastructure agreement with a Hong Kong-based firm, the China International Fund (CIF), in partnership with the Angolan state-owned conglomerate Sonangol.\(^2\) In April 2011, the British-Australian company Rio Tinto agreed to accept the 2008 loss of half of its potentially extremely lucrative iron ore concession—which it had previously vigorously disputed—and to pursue development of the remaining blocs, in exchange for ceding a larger ownership share and a $700 million one-time payment to the Guinean government.\(^2\)

**Drug Trafficking**

Guinea, among other countries in the region, has emerged as a reported transshipment hub for cocaine en route from South America to Europe, reportedly with the complicity of government

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\(^2\) The U.S.-based organization Revenue Watch and international financier George Soros assisted with the drafting process, among others.


\(^2\) While the CIF, which has been linked to multi-billion dollar deals in Angola and other African countries, is ostensibly a privately owned company, an investigative report released in July 2009 by the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission found that “key personnel have ties to Chinese state-owned enterprises and government agencies.” U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission, The 88 Queensway Group, July 10, 2009. See also The Economist, “The Queensway Syndicate and the Africa Trade,” August 13, 2011.

and military officials.\textsuperscript{26} In 2009, then-President Dadis Camara initiated populist moves to crack down on drug trafficking; however, these largely relied on the public naming and humiliation of alleged wrongdoers—including at least 20 high-profile government officials, police and military officers, and close relatives of the late President Lansana Conté—rather than advancing institutional reform. While many Guineans welcomed the attempt to pursue powerful figures in the former regime, concerns arose over a lack of due process, and some arrests appeared to be politically selective. A quasi-military agency, the State Secretariat for Special Services, was created by the CNDD to head counter-narcotics efforts. It continues to exist, although its legal mandate and authorities have not been clearly defined, leading some to raise due process and human rights concerns. Some troops participating in anti-drug efforts have been accused of abuses of power, and the head of the agency has been accused of serious human rights abuses.\textsuperscript{27}

**Foreign Relations**

The conduct of elections in 2010 has opened the way for Guinea to renew its relationships with donors, neighbors, and regional organizations. The 2008 coup had previously caused the suspension of Guinea’s membership in the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Organization of Francophone Countries (OIF); membership in these organizations has now been restored. Aid from many bilateral donors (including the United States; see below) and from international financial institutions has been re-initiated.\textsuperscript{28} However, the resumption of full European Union (EU) development aid is contingent on the holding of “free and transparent” legislative elections. Guinean-French relations, always significant, could benefit from Condé’s long residence in France, although French officials have recently criticized electoral delays. Relations with Russia, a longtime diplomatic partner, were negatively affected during Dadis Camara’s leadership by a dispute over rights to an aluminum refinery claimed by RusAl, which remains ongoing. Economic and diplomatic ties with China, another longtime partner, appear set to continue to grow closer. Saudi Arabia has also offered development aid. Ties to Senegal may have been negatively affected by Condé’s assertion in mid-2011 that Senegal had hosted the leaders of a failed plot to kill him (see “Current Issues,” above).

Guinea’s ties with many states in the region were tense under former President Conté, as Guinea actively supported various factions in the Sierra Leone and Liberia civil wars (1989-2003). Guinea also hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from regional conflicts, most of whom have now returned.

**U.S. Relations**

The Obama Administration congratulated Guinea in 2010 “on the successful completion of its first democratic presidential election” and congratulated Alpha Condé on his victory, expressing


\textsuperscript{27} HRW, “Rein in Soldiers,” April 27, 2009.

\textsuperscript{28} Following the coup, the violent military crackdown of September 2009 had prompted additional, more stringent international efforts to isolate the CNDD junta, including targeted European Union and AU sanctions and an EU/AU/ECOWAS arms embargo. The United States announced targeted travel restrictions.
hopes that “it is only the first step on the road to democratic transition and civilian rule.”

President Obama also expressed “appreciation for the way in which Cellou Dalein Diallo gracefully accepted the outcome of the election.” President Condé, along with three other West African presidents, met with President Obama at the White House in late July 2011.

The United States strongly condemned the 2008 military coup and subsequently stated that the primary U.S. objective in Guinea was to assist with “peaceful, democratic change.” In response to the September 2009 military crackdown, U.S. officials called for CNDD leaders to step down, imposed targeted travel restrictions on CNDD leaders and associates, and instituted an ordered departure of U.S. Embassy staff. The U.S. Peace Corps program was suspended; the program had previously been halted in 2007 due to insecurity in connection with anti-government protests. Peace Corps volunteers returned to Guinea in 2010. The United States backed the 2010 transitional government led by Gen. Konaté and praised the June elections as “historic.”

U.S. policy toward Guinea has also focused on economic and security issues. Guinea’s eligibility for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) was restored in October 2011 after having been revoked in December 2009. Guinea provided 21% of U.S. bauxite imports between 2007 and 2010, making it the second largest source of such imports (after Jamaica). Several U.S.-based resource firms operate in Guinea and face possible growing competition from other foreign investors. Amid rising U.S. concerns over Guinea’s role in the transnational drug trade, in June 2010, President Obama designated Ousmane Conté, a son of the late president Lansana Conté, as a “drug kingpin,” freezing any U.S. assets held by Conté and prohibiting any transactions with him by persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction.

**Selected Congressional Actions**

Several pieces of legislation related to Guinea were introduced during the 111th Congress. These included H.Res. 1013 (Ros-Lehtinen), Condemning the violent suppression of legitimate political dissent and gross human rights abuses in the Republic of Guinea, passed by the House on January 20, 2010; and S.Res. 345 (Boxer), A resolution deploring the rape and assault of women in Guinea and the killing of political protesters on September 28, 2009, passed by the Senate on February 22, 2010. Congress has also placed restrictions on certain types of security assistance to Guinea (see “U.S. Assistance,” below). In March 2007, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on the political situation in Guinea amid mass anti-government demonstrations.

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31 State Department, FY2011 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, February 2010.
34 The large U.S.-based multinational aluminum firm Alcoa, for instance, is a major shareholder in the Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée, a bauxite mining and export partnership with the Guinean state, while a much smaller U.S energy firm, Hyperdynamics, holds the largest single license for offshore oil exploration.
35 Conté, who had been imprisoned in Guinea on drug-related accusations since February 2009, was released by Guinean authorities in mid-July 2010. Further details on the scope of the “kingpin” designation, made under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Title VIII, P.L. 106-120), are discussed in U.S. Treasury, Narcotics: What You Need to Know about U.S. Sanctions Against Drug Trafficiers, July 15, 2010.
U.S. Assistance

U.S. bilateral aid aims “to help Guinea become a democratic and stable U.S. ally and an anchor of stability in a region plagued by a history of political, religious and ethnic turmoil.” Guinea’s aid package focuses on health (about three-quarters of the total funding allotment), democracy and governance, and military professionalization. The Obama Administration has requested $21.6 million in bilateral aid for FY2013, a slight decrease from $23.3 million (estimated) in FY2012 and $25.0 million in FY2011 (Table 1, below). International financial institutions, which receive significant U.S. support, are separately providing significant financing to Guinea, following the decision to restart previously suspended programs after the 2010 elections.

U.S. bilateral aid, with the exception of humanitarian and democracy-related assistance, was suspended for two years in response to the 2008 coup. Congressionally imposed legal restrictions on assistance to post-coup governments were not considered to apply, but this policy broadly conformed to them. In practice, security assistance and limited environmental aid was cut, while most other aid fit into permitted categories. The United States was thus a significant donor to Guinea’s 2010 election process, as were the European Union, France, Japan, Germany, and Spain.

Aid restrictions were lifted following the 2010 presidential election, and the Administration has indicated that it seeks to provide limited support for security sector reform. Congress has enacted restrictions on certain military training activities due to human rights concerns: P.L. 112-74, the FY2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act, restricts International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs in Guinea to “training related to international peacekeeping operations and expanded IMET,” which emphasizes respect for human rights and civilian control. In February 2012, the Administration notified Congress of its intent to provide $142,000 in “no-year” FY2003 IMET to “kick-start” the IMET program following the lifting of aid restrictions.


37 State Department, FY2012 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations.
38 Provisions included in annual appropriations legislation, often referred to as “Section 508” sanctions, bar direct assistance to governments that have come to power through a military coup or decree deposing a democratically elected regime, with exceptions for democracy and humanitarian aid. The State Department determined that the December 2008 coup in Guinea did not trigger the provision because the deposed government had not been “duly elected.” (State Department response to CRS query, March 2010.)
39 The coup-related suspension of security assistance was partially rolled back upon Gen. Konate’s assumption of power in early 2010, and several new security assistance programs were initiated. Notably, in mid-2010, the State Department funded the training of a 75-member presidential security detail for then-President Konaté, using $1.6 million in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds.
40 The February 16, 2012, notification stated that the focus of the funding “may include” English language training, “mobile education teams,” and maritime security training.
Table 1. Bilateral Foreign Assistance by Account

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY2009</th>
<th>FY2010</th>
<th>FY2011</th>
<th>FY2012 (est.)</th>
<th>FY2013 (req.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>14,518</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Healtha</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>17,469</td>
<td>17,500</td>
<td>15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food For Peace (P.L. 480, Title II)</td>
<td>2,501</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMET</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKO</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMF</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLE</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>13,377</td>
<td>23,618</td>
<td>25,017</td>
<td>23,300</td>
<td>21,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: DA=Development Assistance; IMET=International Military Education and Training; PKO=Peacekeeping Operations; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; INCLE=International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement. This table does not reflect certain types of regionally allocated assistance, or funding administered by agencies and departments other than the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Source: State Department, annual Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations.


Outlook

The United States played a key role in Guinea’s 2010 transition to an elected, civilian government. Although attention has since faded, Guinea may continue to interest U.S. policymakers for its role in regional stability, its economic potential, and its recent democratic transition. The 2010 elections were viewed as a success by the international community, and the country’s outlook has greatly improved from early 2010, when Guinea was beset by deep political uncertainty and fears of imminent civil conflict. At the same time, the election period, and its accompanying violence, exacerbated societal tensions and raised the stakes for future political competition. Interethnic relations—historically perceived as relatively harmonious in Guinea though subject to political manipulation and occasional violent confrontation—have deteriorated, and the full implications have yet to be assessed.

President Alpha Condé faces tremendous expectations from Guinea’s impoverished population as well as vast challenges: the election did not alter the underlying causes of Guinea’s instability, notably dysfunctional or near-nonexistent institutions, economic stagnancy, and the military’s opaque structure and overweening size. A military backlash against attempted reforms and/or an inability to organize expected legislative elections could contribute to future insecurity.
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