

## Comoros

African Union peacekeepers returned to Comoros in 2007, a little more than a year after the withdrawal of the AU Mission in Support of Elections in Comoros (AMISEC), which was authorized by the AU Peace and Security Council in March 2006. The elections of May 2006 were followed by a sense of calm and stability throughout the country. However, disagreements with the island of Anjouan over scheduled elections for presidents on each of the autonomous islands forced the AU to deploy its second peace operation to the island: the AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission in Comoros (MAES) in May 2007. While MAES was initially mandated to provide security during the election period, the prospect of renewed hostilities meant that the mission's 300 peacekeepers remained deployed well into the close of the year.

When both Anjouan and Moheli islands declared independence from Comoros in 1997, federal security forces sent to restore order clashed with separatists, leaving forty dead and causing consternation among the archipelago's regional neighbors.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) became involved in resolving the conflicts on the islands in the mid-1990s, with the deployment of the small Observer Mission to Comoros (OMIC) in 1998. The OAU-supported negotiations culminated in the Fomboni Accords in 2001, which provided for a referendum on a new constitution in advance of national elections. Under the Fomboni Accords, each island has substantial autonomy, with a four-year rotating presidency.

The complex electoral arrangement devised by the OAU in 2001—with the terms of

### AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission in Comoros (MAES)

• Authorization Date	9 May 2007 (Communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council)
• Start Date	May 2007
• Head of Mission	Francisco Madeira (Mozambique)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Troops: 300

the presidents of each autonomous island coming to an end in 2007—was to be followed by elections for new presidents on each of the three islands on 10 June 2007. However, President Mohamed Bacar of Anjouan refused to relinquish power at the end of his term of office. Following the federal government's appointment of an interim president for Anjouan in early May, forces loyal to Bacar attacked federal offices and clashed with government forces stationed there, killing two. An AU envoy was immediately dispatched to assess the situation. With continuing tensions, the AU Peace and Security Council authorized the deployment of the 300-strong MAES peace operation, with a mandate to maintain security in support of free and fair elections.

The deployment of MAES, however, was contained to the main island of Grand Comore, and thus had little impact on the belligerent Anjouan. While authorities on Grand Comore and Moheli chose to delay the 10 June elections by one week, elections in Anjouan proceeded on schedule, with Bacar claiming 89 percent of the vote, in an election that that was deemed illegitimate by the international community.

Bacar continued to ignore calls by the AU for the elections to be held again, prompting the Peace and Security Council to impose travel and financial sanctions on the renegade Anjouanese authorities in October 2007. The AU broadened

MAES's mandated tasks to include, among other things, enforcement of the sanctions. As the year drew to a close, MAES peacekeepers had begun patrolling the waters around Anjouan to enforce the AU-authorized travel ban.