

Comoros

AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to Comoros (MAES)

- Authorization Date 9 May 2007 (Communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council)
- Strength as of 30 September 2008 Troops: 400

Following the removal of renegade president Mohamed Bacar of Anjouan in early 2008, the tripartite government of Comoros was able to complete the election cycle that started in 2007. The elections took place largely without incident, thanks to support from the AU Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to Comoros (MAES), deployed since 2007.

When separatist violence broke out in Comoros in 1997, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) intervened by deploying the Observer Mission to Comoros (OMIC) in 1998. The OAU supported talks that 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 (Anjouan, Grand Comore, and Moheli) has substantial autonomy, with its own president and parliament, operating under an overall four-year rotating presidency. At the request of the Comoros president, in 2006 the AU Mission in Support of Elections in Comoros (AMISEC) was deployed to the island to oversee the election for an overall Comoros president.

The 2006 election was to be followed by elections for new presidents on each of the three

islands on 10 June 2007. But President Mohamed Bacar of Anjouan refused to relinquish power at the end of his term. Following the federal government's appointment of an interim president for Anjouan in early May 2007, forces loyal to Bacar attacked federal offices and clashed with federal forces stationed there, killing two. That same month, in response to the continuing tensions, the African Union deployed its second peace operation to the island, MAES, with a mandate to provide security during the election period.

While Grand Comore and Moheli chose to delay their 10 June elections due to the unrest, Anjouan proceeded on schedule, with the defiant Bacar claiming 89 percent of the votes in an election deemed illegitimate by the international community. In the face of Bacar's continued intransigence, in late 2007 the African Union broadened MAES's mandate to include enforcement of travel and financial sanctions on Bacar and his supporters.

In early 2008, Comoros and MAES forces began amassing in Moheli and, on the morning of 25 March, stormed Anjouan, taking control of the island and forcing Bacar to flee. Following the removal of Bacar, who ultimately sought refuge in Benin, two rounds of elections were held in Anjouan, in June and July, with Moussa Toybou winning the presidency. The elections were considered free and fair; though MAES troops responded to several disruptions, there was no violence.

At the end of 2008, Comoros remained stable, with the AU force continuing to provide support to the newly elected government.