



## **Ghanaian peacekeepers fight inhuman enemy**

As the town of Bouaké awakens each day, 50-odd Ghanaian peacekeepers prepare to go into battle. They gather their weapons, ensure everything is in order, and then throw open the doors of their establishment.

The Ghanaians comprise the medical staff at UNOCI's military hospital in the central Ivorian town. Their battle is a daily one against disease, wounds and traumas.

Nestled against the UNOCI headquarters in Bouaké, the hospital opened its doors on the 11th of July 2004. Its materials, from the equipment to the drugs on the pharmacy's shelves, were offered to the United Nations by the Ghanaian government.

The hospital offers care in various areas, from orthopedic surgery to dentistry, says a proud Lieutenant-Colonel Alhassan, deputy commandant-in-chief of the Ghanaian Blue Helmets in charge of administering the hospital. Since the institution's creation, he adds, his team has looked after more than 2,500 "authorized" patients – staff of UNOCI and UN agencies present in the area, and over 3,500 "humanitarian" cases, i.e. the local population.

With a capacity of 22 beds, including two in intensive care, the hospital usually admits patients whose condition is moderately serious. "For the worst cases or for hospitalizations that go beyond six weeks, we are obliged to evacuate the patients to Abidjan," explains Major Bugri, a surgeon.

In addition to its medical staff of 50 – surgeons, specialists, nurses and nursing assistants, the ONUCI hospital in Bouaké has two teams specialized in evacuations – Aero Medical Evacuation Teams (AMET) - each of which has a doctor and two assistants.

Up to July, the AMETs had done at least 17 evacuations, most of them by land, but also by air, using planes sent from Abidjan. "We'll soon have a helicopter to do evacuations from Sector East to this hospital," said the head of AMET, Captain Agbenohevi, explaining that his teams also went to the rescue of accident victims who were not UNOCI personnel.

"In such cases the patients are taken to civilian hospitals in Sector East," Captain Agbenohevi said, such as the Bouaké Central Hospital for those in and around Bouaké.

“We have very good relations with the Médecins sans Frontières team that runs the Bouaké hospital,” said Deputy Commander-in-chief Lt.Col Alhassan. “In fact, our laboratory examines all samples taken in the sector, especially the central hospital, the Catholic hospital and even the hospital run by the Force Licorne.”

However, while the Ghanaian medical personnel are proud of their humanitarian contribution to the town of Bouaké, they recall, however, that their mission is first and foremost to assist UNOCI personnel. “That’s why we do the medical screening of contingents - particularly those that have arrived in Cote d’Ivoire without being vaccinated – in addition to monitoring hygiene in UNOCI’s installations,” Alhassan said.



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