



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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09 September 2003

### CIV41991.FE

Côte d'Ivoire: The service passport; terms and conditions for obtaining one, privileges associated with this type of passport, and difference between a service passport and a regular passport (1999-September 2003)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The following information was provided by an official of the Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire in Ottawa during a telephone interview on 8 September 2003.

While a regular passport is issued to any citizen of Côte d'Ivoire who requests one, service passports are issued solely to Ivorian citizens who work at embassies and to certain employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ivorians Abroad whose mission is to represent the country in various forums, as well as to Ivorian citizens who work for international organizations. The dependants of such employees (children, spouses, and so forth) may also request service passports.

Regular passports are issued by the General Security Services and Ivorian embassies abroad may extend their period of validity; service passports are issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ivorians Abroad, but the embassies are not authorized to renew or extend their period of validity. Service passports confer diplomatic immunity on their holders.

Corroboration of this information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Referring to the reasons that prompted France to impose a visa requirement on holders of diplomatic and service passports from Côte d'Ivoire, the *Le Nouveau réveil*, in its 3 September 2003 edition, stated that (translation) "in the corridors of power, a plethora of people, including those in the immediate circle of power, relatives of the presidential couple, privileged members of the Ivorian Popular Front (Front populaire Ivoirien, FPI), and 'patriotic' young people and women, with the 'usual' complicity of the Minister of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ivorians Abroad, have easily obtained diplomatic and service passports."

The following statements made by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ivorians Abroad, in reaction to France's decision to impose a visa requirement on holders of diplomatic and service passports, in an interview granted to *Fraternité Matin*, may be of interest:

[translation]

Approximately two years ago, we changed our diplomatic and service passports. The old diplomatic passports were red and the old service passports were black. Today, diplomatic passports are wine-coloured and service passports are blue. The purpose of this decision by the authorities was to regularize the issuing and use of these documents. As you know, these documents are very coveted today. Moreover, a new decree clearly specified who is entitled to these documents. And since June 2001, these new documents, that is, the diplomatic and service passports, have been in circulation and have definitively replaced the old documents. ... And today, our statistics indicate that fewer and fewer of these documents are being issued. From this perspective, I can tell you that, even though the objective is not fully achieved, it has been partially reached (3 Sept. 2003).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### References

Côte d'Ivoire. 8 September 2003. Ivorian Embassy in Ottawa. Telephone interview with an official.

*Fraternité Matin* [Abidjan]. 3 September 2003. "Passeports diplomatiques et de service : la France impose désormais un visa." <<http://www.abidjan.net/actualites/article/articles.asp?n=40420>> [Accessed 8 Sept. 2003]

*Le Nouveau réveil* [Abidjan]. 3 September 2003. "Côte d'Ivoire-France : le visa désormais obligatoire."  
<<http://www.abidjan.net/actualites/article/articles.asp?n=40389>> [Accessed 8 Sept. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

*Africa Confidential*

Africa Research Bulletin

IRB Databases

*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* >

La Lettre hebdomadaire de la FIDH

Resource Centre country file. Côte d'Ivoire

*West Africa*

**Internet sites, including :**

Africetime

Allafrica

Amnesty International

BBC Africa

European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.net)

FIDH

HRW

Investir en zone franc (IZF.net)

*Notre Voie*

Le Patriote

Presidency of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

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