

First ECOWAS peacekeeping troops arrive in Guinea-Bissau

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Some 70 soldiers of a west African force arrived in Guinea-Bissau on Thursday, part of regional efforts to restore stability after an April 12 coup, an *Agence France Presse* reports.

The soldiers from Burkina Faso were welcomed by officers from Guinea Bissau's police and army as well as representatives of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African states.

Just before their arrival ECOWAS had announced that it was deploying a force of 629 men to Guinea-Bissau "to relieve the Angolan military personnel and support the restoration of constitutional rule.

The soldiers who ousted Guinea-Bissau's government last month cited the Angolan force as a reason for their coup.

They claimed the Angolan troops were conspiring with the Bissau government against the army, which for years has had tense relations with civilian leaders in the chronically unstable west African state.

The soldiers' arrival took place on the same day as the prime minister of a transitional government, Rui Duarte Barros, was sworn into office.

The new government comes after putschists and 35 political parties signed an agreement on a transition period of one year until fresh elections are held.

The coup aborted an election process in which ex-prime minister Carlos Gomes was the favourite to win.

He and interim president Raimundo Pereira, appointed after the death of President Malam Bacai Sanha in January, were both arrested during the coup and have sought refuge in Abidjan since their release.

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