

Banjul, Gambia, February 1 (Infosplusgabon) - A Gambian political scientist, Ismaila Ceesay, has said that the presence of the regional ECOWAS military intervention in the country (ECOMIG) will not prevent long-term security risks "if the president does not win the trust of the army."

President Adama Barrow came to power with the help of regional troops on the orders of the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). They are still in charge of security in the country since their intervention.

But, Mr. Barrow has not visited a single military camp since he came to power, fuelling rumours of his mistrust of the army.

"Many Gambians did not understand the army during Jammeh's era. I can tell you that over 75% of Gambia's military men will not die for Jammeh. They just don't have a choice. It was not just the army that was following Jammeh," Ceesay said in an interview with PANA on Wednesday.

"What about the ministers who were around him? So many people thought that the whole army was loyal to Jammeh but soldiers will tell you that Jammeh had more sophisticated weapons at State House than all other camps put together,"

“Barrow is the commander in chief of the armed forces but has not visited any military barracks since he came to power?

"That should have been his first mission. He should go to the army and tell them that he is the armed forces commander-in-chief and that he has trust in the army in defending our territorial integrity. And he can talk to them about their problems.”

Gambia’s security is currently in the hands of both the regional forces and the Gambians. There are currently 500 regional forces in the country but the government has requested for an addition and an extension of their mandate to one year, sources said.

According to analysts, Gambia is currently facing a complicated security situation. About a week ago, two Gambian army deserters who fled with Jammeh to Equatorial Guinea sneaked back into the country through the airport with the help of insiders who are still loyal to Jammeh.

In an recent interview with local media, Barrow admitted that the incident was a huge “security failure” but insisted that his army is loyal to him, despite claims that they are more loyal to Jammeh.

“There is no security threat, but we have to be vigilant...We have accepted that it was a serious security failure and we are going to learn from it,” he said.

“There is trust between me and the army, and we are doing a lot as far as the military is concerned. The environment today for the military is far better than it was before. They are better treated today, with utmost respect.

“We are reforming. I am the commander-in-chief of the army and all their files come here...There is a lot of training going on, and even some of our soldiers are going to Senegal for training very soon.”

Barrow said his government is establishing a military academy as part of the reform efforts.

“I am not saying the ECOMIG should leave. We need ECOMIG but the longer they stay, the complicated our security situation becomes... There are military who are not happy and they feel rejected by the administration... This could cause pockets of mutiny,” Ceesay said. “We have seen a situation like this when the Nigerians were here.”

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