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Comoros calm reigns French troops to "reorganise" Comoran forces

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(ME/0641 ii) There was total calm in **Comoros** on 16th December and the four French warships, which had been stationed off Moroni, had left the **Comoran** coast, AFP reported that day. Citing **Comoros** interim President Said Djohar, French Inter reported on the 16th that the French troops that had landed in Moroni on the 15th would be staying for a period of one to two years in order to reorganise and train the **Comoran** armed forces. AFP said that this reorganisation was being undertaken with the aim of avoiding the risk of creating another "army within an army" such as the presidential guard had come to be. Djohar also said he would be organising "free and democratic" presidential elections in **Comoros**, in the presence of observers, the agency reported.

On 15th December, AFP reported a statement made to the press in Lome by French Prime Minister Michel Rocard, in which he said that the French operation on the **Comoros** that day did not constitute an "intervention" in the internal affairs of the **Comoros**, which was "a free and independent state". **France** did not have to intervene in the **Comoros**. We only gave a helping hand in the process of a return to a more normal situation as far as democracy is concerned", Rocard said, because "this small archipelago was taken over by a group of European mercenaries, including a Frenchman, which does not honour anybody".

The leader of the banned opposition **Comoros** Democratic Front, Mustapha Said Cheikh, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for an attempted coup in 1985 against President Ahmed Abdallah, was released on 16th December, Radio South Africa reported. On the 14th, Radio **France** d'Outre Mer (Mayotte) reported that Prince Said Ali Kemal, grandson of the last Sultan of **Comoros**, who had been living in exile in Paris, had decided to return to **Comoros**, at Djohar's invitation, in order to present his candidature for the presidential election.

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