

* Skirmishes Escalate at Mauritanian Border

34190078A Dakar FAGARU in French

Feb 90 p 6

[Article by Idrissa Diop: "Senegal-Mauritania: Dead People, Blood, and Tears"]

[Text] It is a wartime situation, an undeclared war under way in the valley of the Senegal River. Howitzer rounds, rockets, and the firing of automatic weapons by the Mauritanian Army have caused many casualties among the Senegalese civilian population. The Senegalese Army, itself, has suffered some losses, including one dead and several wounded of all ranks: one corporal, one sergeant first-class, an adjutant, and a lieutenant. That happened during the first 10 days of January 1990 in Padalal and Ngawle, located respectively in the Departments of Matam and Podor. These two departments have suffered from the firepower of the Mauritanian Army which, after having bombarded Dondu on 7 January, moved northeast toward the Department of Bakel. The war has settled down.

Daande Maayo Area Is No Longer Safe

On the morning of 14 January a drive through the city of Matam showed us a population that was apparently calm and going about its normal concerns. In places there were small groups of armed soldiers.

On the afternoon of 14 January we visited Diamel, a village about six kilometers from Matam. This village had been attacked by the Mauritians on several occasions in October and November. The most recent attack occurred on 20 December 1989. Bullet marks were visible everywhere on the walls of houses and on the trunks of trees. No one had died. One fisherman was wounded. A few sheep and goats had been killed. Considerable fire had been directed at this village (7.5-mm rounds and perforating tracer bullets). Since then, elements of the Senegalese Army have set up positions in the village, where the residents are faced with a serious problem. The Mauritians have confiscated the fields that they were cultivating. No one goes to his farm. At the end of the past winter season allotments of land were distributed to the villagers in areas classified as "forest." A village leader said bitterly that "all of the operations by the Mauritanian Army are aimed at taking the land away from our people and making them leave. We will not leave here, even though the Daande Maayo area (the valley of the Senegal River) is no longer safe."

On 15 January we went to Dondu, located about 20 kilometers from Bokidiawe, the capital of this rural community. Dondu, which is still in mourning, is a desolate place to see. The Mauritanian gunfire resulted in the death of Samba Nierry Konte, while Yaya