

An Additional 12,000 United Nations Troops Proposed to Intervene in the Central African Republic

French President Hollande visits Bangui and Nigeria emphasizing the central role of Paris

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A proposal submitted to the 15-member United Nations Security Council on March 3 calls for the deployment of an additional 12,000 foreign troops to the Central African Republic (CAR). The so-called “peacekeeping force” is ostensibly designed to reinforce the existing 9,000 French, African and European Union (EU) soldiers already inside or being sent into the mineral-rich state.

These developments are being discussed in the aftermath of a visit by French President Francois Hollande who stopped over in Nigeria prior to visiting the CAR. Hollande said that the presence of 2,000 French troops had saved thousands of lives in the country which has been wracked by political instability and the displacement of approximately 700,000 people.

Despite these claims by Hollande, the minority Muslim population in the CAR has been imperiled by armed militias called the “Anti-Balaka.” Many Muslims have had their mosques burned to the ground and their businesses looted by mobs.

With the removal of the previous government of interim President Michel Djotodia, the former titular leader of the Muslim-dominated Seleka Coalition, during January and the installation of the current head-of-state Catherine Samba-Panza, the attacks on the Muslim population, which constitutes only 15 percent of the overall number of people inside the country, have continued.

The attacks and removal of the Islamic community has resulted in an overall food crisis in the CAR. Many of the traders and distributors of food and other consumer goods were Muslims.

In addition to the fleeing of hundreds of thousands of Muslims, the much talked about food aid through the United Nations has not materialized. The UN recently warned that a looming food crisis in the CAR could lead to famine.

France Seeks to Rebuild Empire in Africa

Francois Hollande first visited the West African state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, an oil-producing country with close economic and political ties to the imperialist states. On Feb. 27, the country which has the largest population of any other state in Africa, was

commemorating the 100th anniversary of the consolidation of Nigeria under British colonial rule.

At a conference on security in Africa held in conjunction with the centenary, Hollande offered France's assistance in the military campaign against the Boko Haram religious group which has waged a campaign of sabotage against the federal government since 2009. Boko Haram is largely based in the north of the country which under British colonial rule remained underdeveloped in comparison to the west of Nigeria where the commercial capital of Lagos is located.

Hollande told participants at the security conference that "Your struggle is also our struggle. We will always stand ready not only to provide our political support but our help every time you need it because the struggle against terrorism is also the struggle for democracy." (France 24, Feb. 28)

According to France 24, "The meeting comes as local officials and residents of the north-eastern Nigerian town of Buni Yadi criticized Nigerian security forces for their slow response to Tuesday's gruesome attack on a local school dormitory, which killed 43 people, mostly students. Shortly after the attack, Nigeria appealed to France and to the governments of neighboring Francophone countries - notably Cameroon, Niger and Chad - to assist in the battle against Islamist militants who have set up bases in the porous, sparsely populated border regions."

"We need international cooperation with France and with French-speaking West Africa to work together to address this problem before it becomes a major problem for France and for Western interests in West Africa," Nigerian Information Minister Labaran Maku stressed during the gathering. France 24 observed as well that "French troops are currently stationed in Mali and Central African Republic (CAR), assisting African forces in the two former French colonies and sparking questions over whether France is slipping back to an interventionist past when Paris played gendarme in its African 'pré carré' (backyard)."

Nonetheless, with specific reference to the CAR, the French and allied African military presence has not stabilized the country or provided adequate security measures to protect the Muslim population. In Mali, where France intervened in January 2013 to supposedly drive out Islamic groups based in the north of the country, troops remain while tensions are still high in the region.

The presence of United States, French and EU troops in various African states is a reflection of the failure of the continental organization, the African Union (AU), to mobilize a regional standby force that could effectively address the issues of peacekeeping, internal and cross-border stability and national reconciliation and reconstruction. Many of the internal conflicts within the post-colonial African states are a direct holdover from the divide and rule tactics of the colonial and neo-colonial powers based in Europe and North America.

These imperialist states have their own exploitative agenda in Africa today. The aim is to dominate the extraction and distribution of natural resources and to block the burgeoning economic and political relations between AU member-states and the People's Republic of China as well as other countries which can act independently of the Western countries.

The solution to the current security and economic crises in Africa lies in reversing its

continuing dependency on ruling class interests in the capitalist countries. Only when Africa breaks with these class interests and exercises its independence and sovereignty can real solutions to these regional problems be developed and implemented.

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