

## France Doesn't Want to be Left Out of "New Scramble for Africa"

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*The French planned operation in the Central African Republic is a part of the ongoing inner-imperialist rivalry between France and the United States for control of post-colonial Africa, Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire, told RT.*

*President Hollande has said that France will take immediate military action as sectarian violence escalates in the Central African Republic.*

*Earlier the UN Security Council voted to allow French troops to join an African peacekeeping force.*

*Fresh clashes between local militias in the capital Bangui have killed about 100 people and wounded scores more.*

RT: Shouldn't France have taken action earlier as the violence there has been escalating since March when the president was toppled? Why now is this suddenly an issue?

Abayomi Azikiwe: This is something that has been planned now for several months. The French already have troops inside the Central African Republic, [in] the capital of Bangui. They've admitted to at least 650 troops who have been there for considerable amount of time. They claim they are there to protect France's interests as well as French citizens. This is a former French colony.

We also have to keep in mind that this is not the first time that France intervenes in the affairs of the Central African Republic or other former French colonies on the African continent. So this is something that has been anticipated now for several months. At this point they feel very strongly that they have the backing of the UN Security Council in pursuing this effort.

RT: Do you think that the French-led troops are even capable of taking control over the situation in the country? Is foreign intervention an answer?

AA: No, foreign intervention is not the answer. I don't believe that France has the capability of normalizing the situation inside the Central African Republic. France is only pursuing its own national interests. It's also competing with the role of the United States on the African continent. The US has intervened extensively over the last several years in Africa in numerous countries. There is the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) that has thousands of troops right now involved in operations all over the continent and even off the

coast of both East and West Africa.

So France doesn't want to be left out of this new scramble for Africa. People have to keep in mind that the Central African Republic has very important strategic resources such as gold, diamonds and uranium, which are essential to the overall international economic system. So this is a part of the ongoing inner-imperialist rivalry between France and the United States for control of post-colonial Africa.

RT: You mentioned that France is acting in its own interests. But from the outside it definitely looks like a repetition of what we've seen in Mali, where local authorities called for French assistance in curbing the Islamic insurgency. Why is Paris so interested in helping France's former colonies out?

AA: Well, they are not interested in helping the former colonies out, they are interested in pursuing their own economic, political and strategic interests, and [interests] of the opposition in the Central African Republic, which has requested French intervention. But the Seleka government, which is there in power now, has a very small margin of support inside the country, and Seleka itself is not a uniform coalition. It is composed of four different former rebel organizations.

The leader of the group Michel Djotodia is Islamic and the Muslim population there constitutes less than 20 percent of the overall demographics inside the Central African Republic. They can utilize the fact politically that Seleka is a Muslim-dominated coalition, which is trying to control the government there, but by no means is it Islamic or Orient in terms of this political outlook inside the country. You also have competing forces outside of Seleka. Some of them are still loyal to the former president François Bozizé who himself was overthrown earlier this year.

*Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of the Pan-African News Wire*

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