

France, Now the United States, Suspended from Military Operations in Niger?

Government in Niamey rebuffs Washington's overtures to remain in the uranium-rich state under the guise of counterterrorism.

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In the latest wave of anti-imperialist actions sweeping various West African states in the Sahel region, the government in Niger has nullified a security agreement with the United States.

Following the same decision related to French intervention in its former colony, the National Council for the Safeguarding of Our Homeland (CNSP) administration has declared that such cooperation pacts related to military affairs are no longer beneficial to the country.

French President Emmanuel Macron sought to have the western-allied ousted leader Mohammed Bazoum reinstated after his overthrow on July 26, 2023. This plot, initially supported by Washington, was aimed at encouraging a military force staffed by member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to intervene with French and U.S. logistical support. Under the false pretense of salvaging democracy in the Sahel, the administration of President Joe Biden would then take credit for reimposing Bazoum while maintaining its drone facilities and troop presence in Niger.

The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has up to 1,000 soldiers and intelligence personnel operating in Niger. Previous governments in Niger had acquiesced to the presence of AFRICOM inside the country. However, the attacks by rebel groupings against the central government in Niamey continued despite the escalating deployments from France and the U.S.

Attempts to salvage the Pentagon presence in Niger took place in at least two phases. When the proposal for an ECOWAS military intervention drew enormous criticism and protest, the

Biden administration sought to distance itself from France. Discussions were held with the CNSP government suggesting that the State Department would not follow through with classifying the events of July 26 as a “coup.” Designating these developments as a coup would seriously impact the diplomatic relations between Niamey and Washington.

During the months after the seizure of power by the military-led government now controlling Niger, French Armed Forces and diplomatic personnel were ordered out of the country. Later the U.S. announced a scaling back of operations in Niger.

High-level State Department officials were deployed to Niger several months ago where they sought to intimidate the new government. Rather than seek readmission after its suspension from ECOWAS and the leveling of economic sanctions, the government in Niger formed a security alliance with Mali and Burkina Faso, known as the Alliance of Sahel States.



Alliance of Sahel States map (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

The second phase of the diplomatic efforts by Washington to reset its relations with Niamey consisted of yet another State Department delegation which visited Niger during mid-March. It was at the conclusion of these meetings between the U.S. and Niger, that the CNSP government announced the revocation of its military agreements with Washington.

Journalist Reed Kramer wrote in an article published by allafrica.com news website [that](#):

“The military regime in Niger on Saturday (March 16) revoked ‘with immediate effect’ the military cooperation agreement with the United States dating from 2012. The decision followed several days of tense discussions involving a delegation of senior American officials who visited the capital Niamey last week – a trip apparently triggered by growing concerns that Niger was moving towards a uranium sales deal with Iran. In a video announcement posted on X and Facebook, a day after the U.S. officials departed, Colonel Amadou Abdramane, spokesperson for the ruling military council, criticized a ‘condescending attitude’ by the delegation leader, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Molly Phee. ‘The Government of Niger, taking into account the aspirations and interests of its people, denounces with immediate effect the agreement relating to the status of military personnel of the United States and civil employees of the U.S.

Department of Defense on the territory of Niger,' Abdramane said.”

France and the U.S. are quite concerned over the potential for the Alliance of Sahel States to move closer to the Russian Federation. Demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people, mainly youth, in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have simultaneously called for the departure of French and now U.S. forces from their resource-rich countries, which remain severely underdeveloped, along with flying national and Russian flags. Despite propaganda and psychological warfare campaigns by the imperialists; the training and financing of armies; and the threat of further destabilization campaigns; these states are rapidly turning away from Paris and Washington.

These diplomatic and military setbacks are taking place while the Biden administration is facing a serious challenge to its reelection. A proxy war launched a decade ago in Ukraine resulting in the Russian Special Military Operation beginning in late February 2022, is facing defeat on the battlefield. In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians are fighting the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) which are fully backed by Washington. In addition to its diplomatic maneuvers in Niger, other governments on the African continent are being subjected to destabilization efforts.

The Republic of South Africa has openly challenged the U.S. for its facilitation of the Gaza genocide. The African National Congress (ANC) administration led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, has taken the State of Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) charging Tel Aviv with violating the Genocide Convention. Due to South Africa's refusal to adopt the U.S. position on Ukraine and its mobilization of public opinion internationally in defense of the Palestinian people, Washington is attempting to weaken and remove the ANC from power.

False allegations of weapons transfers to Moscow by Pretoria failed to turn up any evidence. The Biden White House later stated that the South African legal action against Israel had no merit. These developments have further exposed the imperialist character of the present administration in Washington.

ECOWAS Lifts Sanctions Against Niger and Other Suspended Governments

Realizing that the imperialist-engineered efforts to isolate the military governments in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have largely failed, the ECOWAS regional organization chaired by Nigerian President Bola Tinubu announced the lifting of economic sanctions against Niamey. Mass sentiment throughout the ECOWAS region has illustrated the heightening consciousness and activism demanding genuine independence, self-determination and sovereignty.

Later the All-Progressives Congress (APC) administration in the Federal Republic of Nigeria ended its own sanctions against neighboring Niger. The Alliance of Sahel States have indicated that they are not interested in returning to the ECOWAS fold. Their current interest lies in forming coalitions with governments other than those in Western Europe and North America.

Also, most of the sanctions by ECOWAS have been lifted against Guinea, which experienced a military takeover in 2021, as well as Burkina Faso and Mali. All four military governments which were suspended from ECOWAS are being asked to return.

[According to a report in Al Jazeera](#) during the ECOWAS Summit in late February:

“Speaking in his opening remarks at the start of the summit, ECOWAS chairman and Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said the bloc ‘must re-examine our current approach to the quest for constitutional order in four of our Member States’, referring to the three suspended countries, as well as Guinea, which is also military led. Tinubu urged Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso to ‘reconsider the decision’ and said they should ‘not perceive our organization as the enemy’.”

Despite its pro-western orientation, the Tinubu administration in Abuja is facing significant challenges on the economic and security fronts. A precipitous decline in the value of the Niara and the worsening problems of violence and kidnapping in the northern areas has weakened the regional and international stature of the current Nigerian administration. Although the imperialist states claim that they are committed to democratic forms of governance, the real issues motivating France and the U.S. are their determination to continue economic and military dominance over the West Africa region.

Washington and Paris Faced with a Dilemma in the Sahel

Absent its neo-colonial puppets in various African states, it will be much more difficult to implement hegemonic policies. The former colonial and existing neo-colonial apparatuses are being compelled to engage in more direct military interventions in Africa and across the world.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members are being stretched thin from Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, to the African continent and the Asia-Pacific. Biden’s supplementary funding for further militarization has been stalled in the U.S. Congress in this national election year. Obviously, the ultra-conservative Republican Party is holding up funding for the Ukraine war and Israeli aggression notwithstanding its stated policy of “containing China”, in its ongoing campaign to make Biden appear even weaker politically.

Antiwar and anti-imperialist organizations in the Western industrialized states must raise the issues taking place on the African continent right alongside opposition to the proxy war in Ukraine and the genocide being carried out in Palestine. Irrespective of which capitalist party wins in the November elections, without a militant mass movement in Western Europe and North America, money will continue being spent on failed attempts to effectively silence and destroy opposition to imperialism around the globe.

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