

## French Military Begins Withdrawal from Chad

Following other Sahel states in West Africa the government is seeking to enhance its national security

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*Yet another African state has broken its military agreements with the former colonial power of France.*

Chad, an oil-rich country bordering West and North Africa, has been a longtime ally of Paris plagued by decades of instability due to factional and regional disputes.

On December 10, the French military began to pull out its troops furthering the rapidly declining relationship between the two countries. This process follows similar policy shifts in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger which have formed a new Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

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Two Mirage fighter jets flew out of a military base in the country representing the initial phase of the withdrawal of French troops which are stationed inside Chad. The troops have been there under the guise of assisting the government in a protracted war against rebels which have for years challenged the authority of **President Mahamat Déby Itno**.

Deby took over in 2021 after his father, **Idris Deby Itno**, was killed on the battlefield in a military operation against rebels. The current leader assumed control of the state after the former president's assassination. His position was supposed to last for 18 months. Nonetheless, after the transitional period expired, Deby extended his governance for another five years.

Although there were opposition forces which protested the extension of Deby's rule,

obviously many Chadians continue to support the current administration. The growing anti-imperialist sentiment in various African states in the western region has played a role in the consolidation of support for the government.

The relatively strong presence and partnership between Chad and successive French governments are being reversed as more people across the region question the viability of numerous military and economic agreements. In Niger, for example, the CNSP administration which took power in a military coup on July 26, 2023, has expelled French and United States troops while breaking an agreement related to its uranium deposits which had left France with virtual control of this valuable natural resource.

On December 6, hundreds of people demonstrated against the continuing French military presence in Chad. The capital of N'Djamena was the scene of the protests which targeted the French embassy and other symbols of the colonial legacy of the country including a military base.

The Associated Press reported on the manifestation [saying](#):

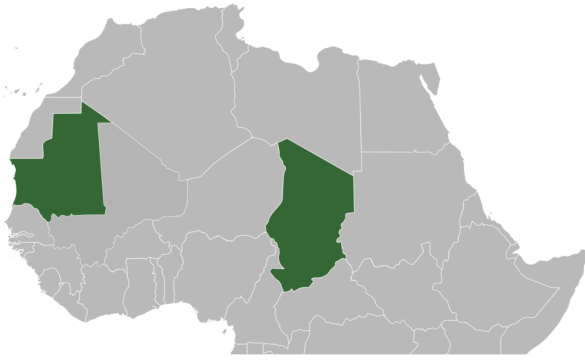
“Protesters in the capital, N'Djamena, chanted ‘Chad for us, France out!’ with some holding banners that read, ‘We do not want to see a single French person in Chad.’ Last week, Chad said in a statement it would end a defense cooperation agreement with France to redefine its strategic partnerships in line with national priorities. France has maintained about 1,000 troops in Chad. The statement didn’t specify when they have to leave. Some protesters on Friday went to a military airbase where French soldiers are stationed and called for their departure. Others gathered in front of the French embassy, which was under increased protection from the Chadian army.”

## **The Role France and the United States in the Sahel**

Over the last decade the Group of Five (G5) in the Sahel region was organized and coordinated by France ostensibly to fight the growing “Islamic terrorist” threat in the region. The G5 Sahel consisted of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania.

However, the efforts of the G5 did not result in the decline of rebel activity. In fact, the overall situation worsened where millions of civilians were traumatized and displaced. Thousands of civilians and military personnel were killed and wounded since the French-backed purportedly “anti-terrorism” campaign was initiated.

Image: Map of G5 Sahel member states (Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)



The G5 resembled the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) which has followed a similar trajectory. AFRICOM was officially launched in early 2008 under the administration of **then President George W. Bush, Jr.** The purpose as articulated by the Bush administration was to assist the African Union (AU) member-states to enhance their security capacity through Pentagon military training and joint exercises on the continent.

In reality the AFRICOM forces working in conjunction with the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sought to weaken and destabilize African states. The first full-fledged AFRICOM project was the destruction of the North African state of Libya, then the most prosperous country on the continent.

Former Libya leader **Col. Muammar Gaddafi** had come to power in a revolutionary coup led by junior officers in 1969. During the course of the Libyan Al-Fateh Revolution, the country through its oil and natural gas resources was able to build up the country as a powerhouse for Pan-African unity and development. Gaddafi had served as the Chairman of the AU representing the continental body at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2009.

Since the Pentagon-CIA-NATO overthrow of the Jamahiriya in Libya in 2011, the country remains divided as its standard of living has declined precipitously. Libya has never recaptured its political status which was recognized throughout Africa and internationally.

Since the fall of the Libyan government thirteen years ago, instability has increased throughout West and North Africa. These countries where rebels are engaged in operations against the national military forces and the civilian populations includes Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger.

The Libyan government under Gaddafi during 1983-84 intervened in Chad to support a patriotic coalition calling itself the Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT). The grouping opposed French and U.S. domination of the country led then by **Hissene Habre**.

As more territory was liberated by GUNT, France with the full backing of Washington then under **President Ronald Reagan**, sent thousands of troops to bolster the pro-imperialist forces. France had not mobilized its troops in Africa to that degree since the Algerian War of Liberation (1954-1962). Then President Francois Mitterrand of France was forced to

negotiate a temporary settlement with Libya resulting in a de facto partition of Chad.

Eventually Libya withdrew its forces and the situation in Chad remained contested. Since the assassination of Idris Deby Itno three years ago, a loyal ally of France and the U.S., the current administration appears to be more inclined to establish security agreements with the Russian Federation.

The French-led G5 was officially liquidated after all of its affiliates with the exception of Mauritania resigned from the military alliance. These events illustrate that the neo-colonial model of international relations between Africa and the imperialist states is in serious crisis. See [this](#).

## **What Is at Stake in Chad?**

Chad has been a heavily coveted state due to its strategic geographic location within Africa as well as the natural resources found under its soil. Despite this growing economic potential, the people of the country are listed as some of the most underdeveloped internationally.

One reference source on the material wealth of Chad [points out that](#):

“Historically, Chad’s principal mineral resource was natron (a complex sodium carbonate), which is dug up in the Lake Chad and Borkou areas and is used as salt and in the preparation of soap and medicines. The discovery of oil north of Lake Chad led to further exploration and development, and in 2003 Chad began producing oil, which quickly became the country’s most important resource and export. There are deposits of gold located in various parts of Chad, including those mined in the southwestern part of the country. Other mineral deposits include uranium, titanium, and bauxite.”

The petroleum industry has been largely controlled by a consortium under U.S. leadership through multinational corporations such as ExxonMobil and Chevron. Since Chad is a landlocked state, the oil is extracted and sent out of the country by a pipeline which travels through neighboring Cameroun.

In order for the people to benefit from the extractive industries, society will have to be organized along the lines of the interests of the masses of workers and farmers. The wealth which is generated within Chad should all go towards the rebuilding of the state based upon the national and regional unity of the people.

## **Geopolitics and Imperialism**

The former colonizing and contemporary neo-colonizing countries will develop renewed tactics to reassert their imperialist domination over those African states severing military and economic ties. These trends away from the dependence upon France and the U.S. are speaking directly to the objective conditions prevailing on the continent where only the realization of self-determination, sovereignty and social emancipation can resolve the crises of inequality and underdevelopment.

Recent events in Syria provide a profound lesson on the willingness of the forces of settler-colonialism and imperialism to undermine and destroy any coordinated resistance movement. Such attempts may not be far away in the Sahel and neighboring regions.

On the same day that Chad announced the departure of French troops, Senegal declared its intention of following the same policy. Middle East Eye wrote on this phenomenon [noting](#):

“Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who won elections in March, called for the removal of French military bases from Senegal. ‘Senegal is an independent country; it is a sovereign country, and sovereignty does not accept the presence of military bases in a sovereign country,’ Faye stated.”

These statements are in sync with the broader international movement toward operational solidarity among the peoples of the Global South. The realization of unity between the developing countries alongside the working and oppressed peoples within the imperialist states can create the conditions for a just and equitable world system.

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