

Is the French Invasion of Mali tied to a Colonial War for Uranium?

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There is still confusion in UN corridors concerning France's military intervention in Northern Mali, which began on Jan. 11 with air strikes against the so-called Islamist camps moving closer to the capital city of Bamako.

The confusion stems from the French ambassador Gerard Araud's insistence that his government was responding to a request from the Interim-Malian government for assistance, under Chapter 51 of the UN Charter. The Article states that there shall be an inherent right of collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the UN, until the Security Council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security.

Press reports indicated Jan. 16 that 800 French troops landed in Mali, with their numbers slated to reach 2,500 by the end of the month. President Francois Hollande, speaking on French television Jan. 15, said his government was determined to end "Islamist" domination in Northern Mali because it feared use of the territory as a base for attacks against the West.

"The Malian war has the potential to destabilize the region, a fact not lost on many of Mali's neighbors. Yet the solution to this crisis will not be found in France's intervention," wrote Bill Fletcher, Jr. on his Blog, BillFletcherJr.com.

Troops from Niger, Togo, Burkina Faso and Senegal were expected to land in Mali, according to French officials, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States.

"Mali desperately needs the political intervention of the West African states and the African Union in order to advance a process of reconciliation, and to serve as a stabilizing force," stated Mr. Fletcher, an author, international labor activist and past president of the Washington, D.C.-based lobby TransAfrica Forum.

An African Union special representative speaking in Cote d'Ivoire Jan. 14 said ECOWAS and the African Union were working closely to find a solution to the Mali crisis, according to news reports.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius reportedly said on Jan. 14, "Key interests were at stake for us, for Africa, for Europe—so we had to act quickly." Observers immediately began asking could that key interest be uranium.

Uranium is France's key energy resource, according to the World Nuclear Association, with

75 percent of the European nation's electricity being produced from nuclear energy, which explains French dependency on uranium. According to mineral resource analysts, beneath the deserts in Northern Mali and Eastern Niger, territory now exclusively claimed by the nomadic Tuareg tribes, exists the world's third largest uranium reserves as well as substantial oil reserves.

Some observers say for 40-years the French company Areva had exclusive rights to uranium exploitation in Niger, until recently when the government of Niger issued permits to China, India, Britain, South Africa, the U.S., Canada and Australia to explore for uranium and oil, therefore France cannot afford to lose the uranium reserves in Mali.

There is also the China factor.

The Independent, a British publication, stated on Jan. 15 that China has given millions "as a gift" to the Malian people to raise their standard of living. A story in The China Times revealed that Mali and China signed three agreements worth \$117.7 million. The Chinese are to build a hydro-electric dam in Taoussa, located in the region of Gao in northern Mali, now under Islamist control.

China is reportedly active in various development projects in Mali such dealing with industrialization, health, agriculture, education, security, communications and infrastructure.

The Mbendi Information Service reported in 2010 that several companies had been granted permission to explore for uranium in the Falea and Gao regions by the administration of former Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure, who was mysteriously ousted from office in March 2012 by junior Army officers a month before he was to step down.

Some mineral resource experts say uranium potential in the Gao region is thought to be 200 tons, while the Falea-North Guinea basin's potential is thought to be 5,000 tons.

World renowned educator, Pan Africanist, African history scholar, and the U.S. chairman of the World African Diaspora Union, Dr. Leonard Jeffries told The Final Call he understands UN confusion over French insistence that Mali's government requested intervention.

"The French don't need a letter to intervene in their former colonies because of the accords they forced on them before granting independence; and these accords have not been re-worked," Dr. Jeffries said.

For five decades, France has maintained a neo-colonial relationship known as "Pacte Coloniale" that gave France control of components of the new African states, including their economies and military institutions, Dr. Jeffries said. "Paris has cultivated the dependency of their former colonies by hand-picking weak regimes that gave them access to resources," he added.

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