

Niger: France Deploying Forces for 'Intervention' in West Africa



Protesters chanted anti-French slogans and waved Russian flags, with 'France must leave' written on the white banner in the center of this shot.

NIAMEY (AFP) — Niger's coup leaders have said France is gathering forces, war materials and equipment in several neighboring West African countries with a view to "military intervention".

Relations with France, Niger's former colonial power, degraded after Paris stood by ousted president Mohamed Bazoum following the July coup.

"France continues to deploy its forces in several ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) countries as part of preparations for an aggression against Niger, which it

is planning in collaboration with this community organization," Niger's regime spokesman Colonel Major Ama-dou Abdramane said.

The Sahel state is also embroiled in a standoff with the West African bloc ECOWAS, which has threatened to intervene militarily if diplomatic pressure to return Bazoum to office fails.

In his statement, Abdramane said France had deployed military aircraft, helicopters and 40 armored vehicles to Côte d'Ivoire and Benin.

"Military cargo aircraft have enabled large quantities of war material and equipment to be unloaded in

Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, to name but a few," he added.

On August 3, Niger's coup leaders renounced several military cooperation agreements with France, which has about 1,500 soldiers stationed in the country as part of a wider fight against militants.

The military meanwhile maintains France's forces are now "illegally" stationed in Niger.

On Tuesday, a Paris defence ministry source told AFP that the French army was in talks with the military over withdrawing "elements" of its presence in Niger, confirming comments made the previous day by the Niger's regime-appointed Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine.

Every day for more than a week, thousands of people have gathered in the Nigerien capital Niamey around a military base housing French soldiers to demand their departure.

The United States, which has around 1,100 soldiers in Niger, has begun to relocate its troops from Niamey to the central city of Agadez, the U.S. Department of Defense said this week.

France is engaged in a tug-of-war with Niger, which has also withdrawn the diplomatic immunity of French ambassador Sylvain Itte and ordered police to expel him.

At Least 40 Killed in Airstrike on Khartoum Market



Smoke rises above buildings after an aerial bombardment, during clashes between Paramilitary Rapid Support Force and the regular army in Khartoum, Sudan.

ed on rickshaws or donkey carts.

In a statement, the RSF accused the Sudanese army of carrying out the attack, as well as other strikes. The Sudanese army denied responsibility and blamed the RSF.

"We only aim our attacks at the enemy's groupings and stations in different areas," Brigadier General Nabil Abdallah told Reuters.

While the RSF has fanned out across residential areas throughout the capital Khartoum and neighboring Bahri and Omdurman, the army has used its advantage of heavy artillery and air strikes to try to push them back, resulting in hundreds of civilian casualties.

Residents of the area tend to be day workers who, cut off from jobs, are too poor to afford the cost of escaping from the capital.

Mohamed Abdallah, a spokesman for the Emergency Room, which tries to provide medical and other services, said the injured had to be transported

week killed at least 51 people across two separate days. With most hospitals closed and no functioning local government, volunteers struggle to document the full extent of deaths.

Medical aid agency MSF, which operates Bashair hospital in southern Khartoum, said on social media network X that the crowded Goro market was hit at 7 am, and that at least 60 people were wounded. Doctors had stopped trying to count as they operated on torn body parts.

"Khartoum has been at war for almost six months. But still, the volunteers ... are shocked and overwhelmed by the scale of horror that struck the city today," emergency coordinator Marie Burton said.

Strikes in western Omdurman last

Biden in Vietnam in Attempt to Lure China's Neighbor Closer to U.S.

HANOI (Dispatches) — President Joe Biden arrived at Chinese leader Xi Jinping's doorstep on Sunday with a deal in hand to lure yet another one of China's neighbors closer to the United States.

In just the last five months, Biden has hosted the Philippines' president at the White House for the first time in over a decade; he has feted the Indian prime minister with a lavish state dinner; and he has hosted his Japanese and South Korean counterparts for a summit ripe with symbolism at the storied Camp David presidential retreat.

The latest page in the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific playbook came via the establishment of a "comprehensive strategic partnership" that will put the U.S. on par with Vietnam's highest tier of partners, including China, according to U.S. officials familiar with the matter.

Biden secured deals with Vietnam on semiconductors and minerals as the strategic Southeast Asian nation elevated Washington to its highest diplomatic status alongside China and Russia.

The U.S. has been pushing for the upgrade for months as it sees the manufacturing dynamo as a key country in its strategy to secure global supply chains from China-related risks.

Vietnam is having to navigate frosty relations between Washington and Beijing as it seeks its own foothold in the international economic competition.

Top Chinese officials, possibly including President Xi Jinping, are expected to visit Vietnam in the coming days or weeks, officials and diplomats said, as Hanoi seeks to maintain good relations with all super powers.

It also comes as Vietnam's longstanding relationship with Russia faces tests over the war in Ukraine, including talks with Russia over a new arms supply deal that could trigger U.S. sanctions.

Reuters has seen documents describing talks for a credit facility that Russia would extend to Vietnam to buy heavy weaponry, including anti-ship missiles, antisubmarine aircraft and helicopters, anti-aircraft missile systems and fighter jets.

Beijing last week urged Washington to put aside its old zero-sum Cold War mentality and pursue plans that benefit all of humanity.

"We believe that when dealing with relations with Asian countries, the U.S. should abandon the Cold War mentality of a zero-sum game," said Mao Ning, spokeswoman of China's Foreign Ministry.

G20 Summit Wraps Up With India, Brazil, Russia Hailing Success



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with President of Brazil Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva during a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, in New Delhi, Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023.

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrapped up Sunday a G20 summit that played down deep divisions over the war in Ukraine and climate change, but gave him a moment in the diplomatic spotlight.

G20 nations have been riven over the Ukraine war since last year, with Russian President Vladimir Putin skipping the summit entirely to dodge political opprobrium.

Leaders of the Group of 20, which brings together Russia and China as well as some of Ukraine's most ardent backers, have recently struggled to agree on much, in particular about the 18-month-old invasion.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who stood in for Putin at the meeting, on Sunday claimed a diplomatic win.

"We were able to prevent the West's attempts to 'Ukrainize' the summit agenda," the veteran diplomat said, dubbing the two-day gathering a "success".

"The text doesn't mention Russia at all."

On Sunday, Modi formally closed the summit by passing on a ceremonial gavel to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, whose country will take the bloc's presidency in December.

"We cannot let geopolitical issues

sequester the G20 agenda of discussions," Lula said, an implicit reference to wrangling over the Ukraine war.

"We have no interest in a divided G20. We need peace and cooperation instead of conflict."

Indian civil servant Amitabh Kant wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the compromise text on Ukraine had involved "over 200 hours of non-stop negotiations, 300 bilateral meetings (and) 15 drafts".

But despite meeting in what the EU's climate monitor says is likely to be the hottest year in human history, the leaders failed to agree to a phase-out of fossil fuels, despite a UN report a day earlier deeming the drawdown "indispensable" to achieving net-zero emissions.

Instead, they backed a target of tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030, while committing only to a "phasedown" of coal "in line with national circumstances".

G20 members Russia and Saudi Arabia are major oil exporters, while coal consumption is rising in China and India, already the world's biggest consumers of the dirty fuel.

The climate outcomes were "insufficient", French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday, saying the world must "phase out coal very rapidly and much more quickly than today".

Russia Downs Ukrainian Drones Over Black Sea

MOSCOW (Dispatches) — The Russian Defense Ministry says the country's air defenses have shot down eight Ukrainian drones over the Black Sea near the Crimean Peninsula.

Overnight to September 10, an attempt by the Kiev regime to carry out a terrorist attack using aircraft-type UAVs on facilities on the territory of the Russian Federation was stopped," the ministry was quoted as saying by Russia's Sputnik news agency on Sunday.

"Air defense systems on duty destroyed eight unmanned aerial vehicles over the Black Sea near the coast of the Republic of Crimea," the statement added.

The ministry also said that three U.S.-made military speedboats carrying Ukrainian military personnel were destroyed northeast of Snake Island in the Black Sea, falling short of providing details on whether there was any damage or injuries from either incident.

There has been no immediate comment from the Ukrainian military.

Russia began what it called a "special military operation" in Ukraine in February last year, but its territories have come under a series of drone attacks only in recent months.

The Crimean Peninsula, which rejoined Russia back in 2014 after a referendum, has been disrupted by several strikes throughout the war and has seen more frequent attacks during the past several weeks.

The number of drone attacks against Russia has dramatically increased in the past weeks as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hinted at a change in Kiev's failed tactics.

The Kremlin says the West and NATO are playing a direct role in the

Ukraine conflict by pouring advanced weapons and military equipment into the country, warning that NATO weapons are "legitimate targets" for its armed forces.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called for Russia not to be "marginalized" in negotiations aimed at restoring a crucial Black Sea grain export deal, stressing that any initiative that isolates Moscow is unlikely to be sustainable.

Erdogan made the remarks in a press briefing after the conclusion of the annual meeting of the Group of 20 (G20) in the Indian capital, New Delhi, on Sunday, where he said the issue of reviving the Black Sea Grain Initiative was discussed in great detail.

"No process that marginalizes Russia on the Black Sea grain initiative will be viable," he said, adding a meeting is going to be held on the issue between representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the United Nations, without specifying a precise date or location.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by Turkey and the United Nations on July 22, 2022, allowed for the safe export of grain from Ukraine's Black Sea ports.

Russia withdrew from the deal in July this year, saying its conditions for the agreement were not met. Moscow complained that its agricultural exports faced obstacles and not enough Ukrainian grain was going to countries in need under the grain deal.

It said its grain and fertilizer exports faced barriers in practice because of sanctions by the West affecting port access, insurance, logistics, and payments - including the removal of agricultural bank Rosselkhozbank from SWIFT.

News in Brief

BEIJING (Reuters) — China and Europe should "unite and co-operate" against global uncertainties, Premier Li Qiang told the European Union chief on the sidelines of the annual G20 summit in New Delhi. "Risk prevention does not preclude co-operation, interdependence should not be equated with insecurity," Li told EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Saturday, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement. Li urged the bloc to provide a non-discriminatory environment for Chinese firms, adding that China was willing to strengthen dialogue and co-operation in areas such clean energy and green finance, the ministry said in a statement on Sunday. "China and the EU should further unite and co-operate, and use the stability of China-EU relations as a hedge against the uncertainty of the world situation," it quoted Li as saying.

NAYPYIDAW (Reuters) — Myanmar has received the first shipment of two Russian Su-30 fighter jets, Charlie Than, Myanmar's trade minister, told the Russian RIA state news agency in remarks published on Sunday. "Two aircraft have already been delivered," Than told RIA on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum, Russia's annual forum aimed at developing economic cooperation in the region and encouraging foreign investment, which starts on Sunday in the port of Vladivostok. Russia and Myanmar signed a contract in September 2022 for the delivery of six Su-30SM fighter jets, RIA said. The Sukhoi Su-30SM multi-role fighter jet is designed for enemy's aerial target engagement, aerial reconnaissance, combat employment and pilot training, according to Rosoboronexport, Russia's state-controlled arms exporter. Separately, Than told the Russian TASS state news agency that a number of bilateral agreements will be signed at the East Economic Forum, including on developing tourism between the two countries.

MADRID (AFP) — Hundreds of teachers marched through the streets of the Spanish capital, protesting against the privatization of public education and better working conditions. "We are here defending public education, it is a very important public service. It is true warranty of equality of conditions between different social sectors. Public education is a true social elevator, the only one that allows the most disadvantaged people to progress socially. And we find a political movement that goes in the opposite direction here in Madrid, that supports concerted and private education to the detriment of public education, which will be left for people with fewer resources", said one of the protesters. "We are starting the courses in Madrid and as always, with a shortage of teachers, with classrooms full of students. There is a lack of media, there is a lack of institutes, there is a lack of cabbages. There are many construction booths, many barracks where the kids are thought, and we cannot allow it one more year", stated another protester. Protesters carried placards and banners displayed by the demonstrators reading 'Public education, neither bought, nor sold, It is to be defended', 'More teachers and more doctors!', and 'More investment to the public school', among others and chanted slogans denouncing privatization.

ADDIS ABABA (Bloomberg) — Ethiopia completed the fourth and final filling of its contentious dam on the Nile River's main tributary, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said Sunday.

In a statement posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, Abiy said the process was finished despite "external pressure" and congratulated all who worked on the project. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has been a source of major friction between Ethiopia and downstream nations Egypt and Sudan. Cairo argues the project could sharply curtail its access to river flows that provide the North African nation with over 90% of its freshwater needs. The Ethiopian premier and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi this summer agreed on moving ahead with talks related to finalizing the agreement about filling and operating the \$5 billion dam. The first official discussions between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan on the hydropower project in over a year ended without a breakthrough last month. Ethiopia says more talks are planned in its capital, Addis Ababa, in September.

MALE, Maldives (AP) — The Maldives presidential election was headed toward a second round between the top two candidates after none of the eight contestants secured more than 50 percent of the vote for an outright win, local media reported. Main opposition candidate Mohamed Muiz secured a surprise lead with more than 46 percent of votes, while the incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih secured 39 percent in an election that turned into a virtual referendum over which regional power — India or China — will have the biggest influence in the Indian Ocean archipelago state. The second round will take place later this month. Saturday's vote was to choose the country's fifth freely elected president since Maldives became a multiparty democracy in 2008. Eight candidates are vying for the post with Solih, perceived as pro-India, facing off against his main rival Muiz, who is seen as pro-China.