

France Recalls Diplomats from Niger Ahead of Troop Withdrawal

Macron has failed so far to ignite a regional conflict in West Africa while antiwar sentiment has been an embarrassment for Paris and ECOWAS

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President Emmanuel Macron for several weeks has falsely claimed that the French ambassador in Niamey was being held hostage by the newly installed government established by the National Council for the Safeguarding of Our Homeland (CNSP) after the July 26 military-led revolt.

Ousted leader of Niger Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown, ushering in a different direction regarding domestic and foreign policy in this uranium-rich Sahel state which had become an outpost for the French and United States troops.

Macron refused to recognize the CNSP administration after the seizure of power by the new government. In retaliation, Niger ordered the French ambassador and some 1,500 troops out of the country. Macron continued to make allegations about the ambassador being held against his will by the Niger authorities.

These inflammatory statements by Macron coincided with French efforts to encourage the assemblage of a regional military force under the rubric of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). President Bola Tinubu of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was the most vociferous in threatening a military intervention under the guise of reimposing Bazoum.

However, broad segments of Nigerian society spoke out definitively against an invasion. Other organizations, media personalities and political parties in Nigeria, Ghana, Mauritania and Algeria joined the chorus in denouncing Tinubu and his counterparts in Senegal and Ghana. As the threats of a full-blown intervention faded, France maintained its view that the CNSP government had no authority to cancel diplomatic recognition of its ambassador. The same position was held regarding the military presence of Paris in this vast West African

state.

[LeMonde](#), the French newspaper said of the announcement by Macron:

“It took only a few words on Sunday, September 24, for French President Emmanuel Macron to announce during an interview devoted to purchasing power on French television that he had decided to repatriate the French ambassador in Niamey, Sylvain Itté, to Paris and to withdraw 1,500 French troops deployed in Niger to fight terrorism. The decision came two months after a military coup in the Sahelian country, ending weeks of tensions with the junta and a situation that had become untenable for Paris.”

The attitude of France towards its former colonies on the African continent has been one of paternalism. Since the independence of many states in West Africa, France has maintained substantial economic and military domination.

In Niger, a French-owned mining firm controls the largest stake in the country's uranium deposits and their extraction. These resources are utilized to power French cities while huge swaths of territory within Niger remain without adequate electricity.

Sanctions imposed at the aegis of France by Nigeria against its northern neighbor of Niger, has resulted in power outages impacting the functioning of the country's infrastructure. Industrial equipment, consumer goods and foodstuffs have been held up at the borders with Nigeria and Benin as part of the draconian sanctions against the CNSP.

In the same above-mentioned report from Le Monde, it quotes the French president as saying:

“‘France has decided to withdraw its ambassador. In the next hours, our ambassador and many diplomats will return to France. And we are ending our military cooperation with the de facto authorities in Niger because they no longer want to fight terrorism,’ Macron told TF1 and France 2. French soldiers in Niger ‘will return in an orderly fashion over the coming weeks and months,’ Macron added, specifying that their return was to take place before ‘the end of the year.’ His words were immediately greeted with joy in Niamey. Thousands spontaneously rallied at a traffic circle on a road leading to the main military base housing French soldiers.”

Nigerien youth and workers have maintained a sit-in outside the French embassy and military base in the capital. The masses of people want the former colonizer out of their country saying that the presence of French troops, ostensibly there to fight “Islamic terrorism” are in fact responsible for the further weakening of the state.

Regional Implications of the French Withdrawal

Troops from Paris have been asked to leave Mali, Burkina Faso along with Niger. Consequently, France will have to reposition its forces in other less hostile African states.

French military bases in Senegal, Ivory Coast and Gabon remain intact. Nonetheless, a military seizure of power in Gabon on August 30 in the aftermath of the announcement of election results placed France once again in a precarious situation diplomatically. Macron took a completely different posture in comparison to their hostility towards Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali.

The new leadership in Gabon emerged from the presidential guard military units working under the control of the former President Ali Bongo. This new administration in Libreville has refrained from attacking France since taking power in late August. Gabonese military leaders have appointed a civilian prime minister who represented the oil-rich state at the United Nations General Assembly 78th session in New York City.

The new Gabon administration explained that the Bongo family had been in power in the country since 1967. Despite its oil wealth and relative strength of the national economy, the Bongo regime had been investigated and charged for widespread corruption in France. Several elections in recent years were marked by systematic suppression of the opposition and vote rigging. During this time period spanning 56 years, France has continued to defend the Bongo presidencies, with Omar and later his son Ali.

Since the August 30 military takeover, most of the focus of the new Gabonese administration has been directed toward ending corruption and nepotism inside the country. Nonetheless, things could rapidly shift if events in other African states provide indications of the changing political situation in the Sahel and other regions of the continent.

In relations to Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea-Conakry, the statements of their governmental representatives at the UN General Assembly revealed a renewed emphasis on anti-imperialism and Pan-Africanism. These speakers evoked the names of Capt. Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana along with Malcolm X from the U.S.

The Link Between the Struggle Against Neo-Colonialism and the Working Class Movement

The current security crisis in the Sahel and other regions is a reflection of the crisis of neo-colonialism, where despite independence which was won over six decades ago, the economy of these states remains dependent upon the world capitalist system. This world capitalist system is facing its own crisis due in part to the liberatory efforts of the peoples of the Global South, most of whom are the former colonial and semi-colonial states dominated by imperialism.

In addition, the internal contradictions with the capitalist and imperialist systems are creating sharp class divisions and struggles. In Europe, Britain and the U.S., workers are striking demanding substantial increases in wages, benefits and better conditions of employment.

Moreover, the struggle of the working class combined with the upsurge in consciousness, mass actions and urban rebellions of the oppressed nations and minorities of African Americans, Latin Americans along with the African, Arab and Muslim communities in France, provides a glimpse into the potential for building of international alliance committed to total liberation and social emancipation.

France has been the scene of protracted struggles against pension theft and police repression. The government of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne and President Emmanuel Macron have responded to the demands of the workers and oppressed with brutality, mass arrests and accusations of criminality and delinquency.

Obviously, France, Britain and the U.S. have no solutions to the immense problems of imperialist war, political repression, national oppression and economic exploitation. These

important questions of the 21st century must be resolved through the organization and empowerment of the majority of people within the world community.

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