

Guinea Coup Deepens Crisis of Governance in West Africa

Resource rich nation beholden to mineral conglomerates leaves the majority of people exploited and impoverished.

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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Members of the Special Forces in the West African state of Guinea-Conakry seized power from the government of President Alpha Conde, 83, on September 5.

There were reports of heavy gunfire surrounding the president’s residence several hours prior to the interruption of regular television programming for an announcement from the apparent new leadership of the country.

The leader of the coup is Lt. Col. Mamady Doumbouya, 41, who is the Commander of Special Forces and a former member of the French Foreign Legion. Doumbouya has a long career of involvement in various imperialist military endeavors including the United States and NATO intervention and occupation of the Central Asian state of Afghanistan.

The coup leader has previously been photographed outside the United States Embassy in Conakry surrounded by military personnel from Pentagon’s Africa Command (AFRICOM) during the annual armed forces joint exercises with West African states known as Operation Flintlock. AFRICOM, formed under the then U.S. administration of President George W. Bush, Jr. in 2008, has extended its presence and influence across the continent with several thousand troops. AFRICOM and the French Operation Barkhane are ostensibly stationed in Africa to prevent the spread of “jihadist terrorism”. Yet, both Washington and Paris have extensive economic interests in West Africa surrounding the oil, bauxite, uranium and other important areas of the world mining and agricultural commodities sectors.

Doumbouya announced over Guinea Television that he had established a National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (CNRD) which would rule the country pending the creation of a new regime. Just two days later on September 7, Doumbouya said that he would form a new inclusive government committed to ending corruption and bad governance. There was no indication of a timetable for the reestablishment of civilian rule in

Guinea.

At the time of the consolidation of the coup, Doumbouya's appearance over Guinea TV was marked by his person being wrapped in the national flag. The coup leader articulated a list of grievances purportedly justifying the coup saying that the new ruling military committee would create a government of the people not beholden to one man.

This autocratic move by the Special Forces has been condemned by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-nation regional membership organization. Following the same pattern, the African Union (AU), the 55-member federation of all states on the continent, called as well for the restoration of President Conde to office.

The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres rejected the military assumption of power and called for the immediate release of President Conde, who was shown in detention of the coup leaders over Guinea TV by the unelected leadership. Guterres says he is closely following the situation in Guinea.

In addition, the European Union (EU) has condemned the coup and detention of ousted President Conde. France, which dominated Guinea from the late 19th century to its national independence in 1958, is a leading member of the EU.

Doumbouya has close political, military and personal ties to Paris. He is married to a French woman, a member of the National Gendarmerie, one of two police forces. The Gendarmerie is a branch of the armed forces of France falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior with some responsibilities to the Ministry of the Armed Forces. In France, the National Gendarmerie is responsible for policing smaller towns along with suburban and rural areas. There are more than 100,000 members of the security division.

The CNRD summoned former cabinet members to a meeting on September 7, demanding that they appear or otherwise be considered as being in rebellion against the military regime. The government officials were ordered to turn over their assigned vehicles and other property belonging to the state.

During the September 5 statement aired over Guinea TV, Doumbouya proclaimed that:

"Our action is not a coup d'état. It only reflects the legitimate aspiration of people to want to live in an environment where basic human needs can be met." He continued with a list of complaints regarding the Conde administration accusing the former president of "the trampling of citizens' rights, the disrespect for democratic principles, the outrageous politicization of public administration, financial mismanagement, poverty and endemic corruption."

There were widespread demonstrations against Conde during 2019-2020 after the national constitution was altered to provide for the president to run for a third term of office. Some opposition parties and civil society organizations have welcomed the coup largely as a result of the repressive apparatus installed by Conde who won the 2020 elections amid charges of voter suppression and electoral fraud.

The Political Economy of Mineral Extraction

Guinea has the world largest deposits of bauxite, an important mineral used in the production of aluminum. Iron ore, another strategic mineral located in the country, is to be

found in abundance in the country. Surveys indicate that the iron ore deposits found in Guinea surpasses all other sources internationally.

In the immediate aftermath of the military takeover, bauxite prices escalated sharply on the global markets. On September 7, the CNRD announced that production would not be hampered by the coup.

The [Financial Times](#) said in an article published in response to the ascendancy of the CNRD that:

“Guinea has some of the world’s best bauxite and iron ore deposits but its 13 million people remain largely impoverished. It generates most of its revenues from mining exports, which have helped power the economy to more than 6 per cent growth annually over the past five years, following a severe drop after the West African Ebola outbreak that killed 2,500 Guineans. Russia’s Rusal and U.S. company Alcoa are big investors in the bauxite sector, while Anglo-Australian mining group Rio Tinto, Chinalco and the China-backed consortium SMB Winning own parts of Simandou, one of the world’s most important iron ore deposits, in south-eastern Guinea.”

Under the Conde administration greater access has been provided to the mining firms to Guinean deposits of minerals. It is notable that after the suspension of the Guinean constitution, parliament and cabinet, the CNRD wanted to assure the international financial interests that the country was still open for business.

Imperialist Militarism and Neo-Colonial Rule in West Africa

The events in Guinea represent the fourth intervention by the military in political governance structures in the region. During 2020, the Malian military overthrew an elected government using the broad discontent with the failure of the administration to adequately address economic and security concerns in the country.

Mali has been battling an insurgency in the northern and central areas of its territory since the Pentagon-NATO coordinated counter-revolution in neighboring Libya during 2011. The Malian state has also participated in AFRICOM projects where the leaders of all of the military coups since 2012 have been trained within defense colleges in the U.S.

Chad’s longtime President and former military leader, Idriss Deby Itno, was reportedly killed in April during an engagement with rebels fighting to overthrow this resource rich nation which is a gateway to North, Central and West Africa. The son of the assassinated leader, Maj. Gen. Mahamat Deby, was installed in power by a “military transitional council” while the constitution and parliament were suspended. Deby and his soldiers had been a major source for military operations coordinated by the U.S. and France.

Niger as well in the West Africa region, foiled an attempted putsch in late March when a military unit threatened the inauguration of then President-elect Mohamed Bazoum. The election results had been disputed by his opponent Mahamane Ousmane, perhaps triggering an opportunistic maneuver aimed at taking over the state by the military.

With specific reference to Guinea, many western corporate and government-controlled media agencies have repeatedly stated that the coming to power by Alpha Conde was the first democratic transferral of power in its post-independence history. Nonetheless, in actually, the mobilization and organization of the Guinean people by the Democratic Party

(PDG) headed by the late President Ahmed Sekou Toure, was indeed a profound democratic process since it rejected the neo-colonial schemes of France which sought to extend its imperialist rule throughout its colonies in West Africa.

France after the 1958 popular vote by the Guinean people, sought to stifle the national development of the country by withdrawing all technical assistance and infrastructure from the new PDG government. Ghana's then Prime Minister Dr. Kwame Nkrumah stepped in to provide a \$US25 million loan to Guinea which assisted in closing the vast vacuum left by Paris. Guinea and Ghana signed a union agreement in 1958 to foster greater cooperation.

Later in 1960, after the independence of other French colonies, Mali, then headed by anti-imperialist and Pan-Africanist leader President Modibo Kieta, signed another treaty creating the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union. Yet, all of these revolutionary leaders were undermined by pro-imperialist elements within their military structures.

Nkrumah was overthrown in a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) engineered military and police coup in 1966 while he was out of Ghana on a peace mission to North Vietnam. Modibo Kieta was removed by the military in Mali in 1968. Toure died in April 1984 from what was said to have been a massive heart attack. The day following his funeral, the PDG government was toppled by lower-ranking military officers. The coup leader, Lansana Conte, later took off his military uniform to run for president. Conte ruled until his death in 2008 when another military coup was carried out.

Until the AU member-states break economic, political and consequently military ties with the imperialist countries, the instability of the continent will continue. The recrudescence of military coups in the ECOWAS region is a clear manifestation of the heightened levels of neo-colonial intrigue emanating from the western capitals of Washington, London and Paris.

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Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of Pan-African News Wire. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: Guinea President Alpha Conde overthrown by military and detained (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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