



France Slams U.S. for Alleged Betrayal Over Niger Coup

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's visit in post-coup Niger has incensed Washington's NATO ally France, according to a weekend report by French news outlet *Le Figaro*, quoting a source within the French Foreign Ministry.

The United States "did the exact opposite of what we thought they would do," the French daily wrote, according to the diplomat's remarks. "With allies like these, we do not need enemies," it elaborated. Paris has been demanding the reinstatement of ousted President Mohamed Bazoum ever since a new military government emerged in wake of a coup in late July.



AP Images
Emmanuel Macron

Moreover, the French government was prepared to militarily back West African nations to assist with Bazoum's reinstatement, as it upheld the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in its move to deploy reserve forces after the coup.

By dispatching Nuland to Niger, the United States showed that it was prepared to talk with the coup leaders instead, *Le Figaro* complained. "For [French President] Emmanuel Macron, the credibility of France, particularly in terms of discourse on democracy, was at stake. For the Americans, even if they are also concerned about a rapid return to constitutional order, the priority is the stability of the region," the paper's source within the foreign ministry declared.

Americans merely hope to "to keep their bases" in the region above all else, the diplomat said, elaborating that Washington "will not hesitate" to drop a demand for what he termed as "constitutional legality" to attain that aim.

At the moment, Paris' worry is that Washington could ink a deal with Niger's military government without France's participation.

The United States has a considerable ground presence in Niger, amounting to around 1,300 soldiers and almost rivaling that of France, which has about 1,500 servicemen in the country. Furthermore, American troops are separated between two bases, situated in the Nigerien capital of Niamey and the northern city of Agadez.

Agadez is supposedly of notable significance for the United States, as it is home to a landing strip for drones and functions as a surveillance hub for a large area encompassing the area between West Africa to Libya in the north.

The *Le Figaro* article continued that Paris is riled by the fact that, notwithstanding that both America and France have troops in Niger, the French presence is the only one that incites unhappiness among the locals. "The United States, like our other allies for that matter, has a habit of letting us take the hits," the French diplomat complained to the paper.

The coup in Niger happened on July 26, when the presidential guard led by General Abdourahamane



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Tchiani detained Bazoum and his family, quoting a “deteriorating security situation and bad governance.” The move led to harsh criticism from global powers, while ECOWAS enforced stringent sanctions on Niger and gave an ultimatum to the coup leaders to free Bazoum or be prepared for military intervention.

On Monday, Niger’s military government agreed to hold talks with ECOWAS in an attempt to lower hostilities.

Last week, Nuland visited Niger and cautioned the new military government against having any deals with the Russian private military company Wagner, apart from encouraging them to reinstate the Washington-friendly status quo.

Earlier in August, Niger’s military leaders insisted that the French forces depart the country by early September. Based on media reports last week, the commander of the French forces in Niger told Niger’s military leadership’s chief of general staff about Paris’ plans to transfer “nearly 40 soldiers” who were originally located in Niger to Chad.

“The French forces, which are present in Niger, are there, just like others, at the request of the country’s legitimate authorities, on the basis of agreements signed with the legitimate authorities to help fight against terrorism. We have suspended our military cooperation, as well as civil interaction since the [military takeover],” the ministry replied in written form to the question of whether the French troops would back out from Niger.

“We only recognize the decisions of the legitimate Nigerien authorities.”

A total of 1,500 French soldiers are presently stationed in Niger, and 1,000 are now in Chad after they were forced to withdraw from Burkina Faso and Mali after coups in those countries.

Additionally, Paris did not disclose any details pertaining to the potential withdrawal of French troops from Niger to an airbase in Chad in the future.

French troops deployed in rebel-run Niger have been limited to a military base in the national capital of Niamey, according to Russian-based news outlet Sputnik on August 12.

The troops have not left the base or explored streets of the western African city for days, according to Sputnik’s correspondent. Rebel military convoys have been regularly going around the facility without incident.

Thousands of anti-French protestors gathered outside the base on Friday to demand that Niger’s former colonial master cease its military presence in the country.

An advisor to the ousted Nigerien president told Sputnik News that France had rejected the option of withdrawing troops from Niger after the military demands.

On August 9, Niger’s military leadership raised the threat level in the country before claiming that the actions of French troops led to an assault on the Nigerien national guard. The military also posited that a French warplane entered the African nation’s airspace.

“The National Council for the Safeguard of the Fatherland informs the local and international community about the events of extreme seriousness that are taking place in Niger, about the facts of the behavior of the [French forces on our territory](#).... Today, August 9, 2023 at 6.30 am [5:30 am GMT], the positions of the Niger National Guard ... were attacked.... The actions of the French forces were condemned for unilaterally releasing detained terrorists,” Amadou Adramane, Niger’s military’s



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spokesman, proclaimed.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was “very concerned” about the living conditions and safety of detained Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum and his family and again urged for his immediate and unconditional release, a spokesperson declared in a statement.



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