

# Russia Sends Aid to Mali, Worried by Militant Islam

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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**The  Moscow Times**

Russia expressed concern about the spread of militant Islam and growing tension in Mali on Friday as it sent humanitarian aid to the West African country.

The dispatch of the aid signaled Moscow's growing unease about the situation in Africa since the Arab Spring popular revolts, which Russian officials have long warned may strengthen the hand of radical Islamists and fuel violence.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said a transport plane had left for Mali with 36 tons of food and household items, blankets and tents.

The Foreign Ministry warned about growing tensions in the region following talks on Thursday between Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Romano Prodi, the United Nations envoy to the Sahel region of Africa.

"The sides paid particular attention to the situation in the republic of Mali. They expressed particular concern about the activity of terrorist organizations in the north of the country, which represents a threat to regional peace and security," the ministry said in a statement on its website.

"The sides agreed the uncontrolled proliferation of arms in the region after the conflict in Libya creates grounds for an escalation of tension throughout the Sahel," the ministry said.

The statement underlined the need to resolve the situation through the United Nations Security Council.

The ministry released the statement before a trip to Russia next Thursday by French President Francois Hollande, whose country has sent troops to its former colony Mali.

An Islamist alliance of al-Qaida's North African wing AQIM and homegrown Malian groups captured northern Mali last year, armed with weapons seized from Libya after the fall of Moammar Gadhafi.

The aim of the foreign intervention is to prevent northern Mali from becoming a launch pad for international attacks by al-Qaida and its allies.

Russia backed a UN Security Council resolution authorizing military intervention in Mali, but Lavrov said at a news conference last month that the rebels fighting French and African troops were the same fighters the West had armed against Gadhafi.

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