

Central African Republic Open to Russian Military Base

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The Central African Republic (CAR) does not rule out the deployment of full-fledged Russian military bases on top of an existing training facility, the CAR's defense minister has told Russian media.

Russia and the CAR [signed](#) a military deal in August 2018, paving the way for Moscow to step up training of CAR's armed forces. Russia delivered light arms to the CAR's security forces earlier that year and said it had deployed 175 military and civilian instructors to train them.

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CAR's defense minister Marie-Noëlle Koyara told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency in an [interview](#) Thursday that a new Russian military base in her country cannot be ruled out.

“We haven’t yet talked about developing the base specifically, but this possibility is not excluded in the [August] framework agreement,” she was quoted as saying.

Koyara maintained that the current Russian training center cannot be considered a full-fledged military base despite what she says is public perception to the contrary.

“If the presidents, as supreme commanders and leaders of the nation, decide to deploy the base, then our countries will carry it out,” the CAR defense chief added.

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Russia's growing military ties with CAR and its heightened interest in Africa were thrust into the spotlight last July when three Russian journalists were killed while investigating the alleged presence of Russian mercenaries there.

Russia obtained the go-ahead from the UN Security Council to deliver arms to CAR in December 2017, when a mostly Muslim rebel coalition overthrew its then-president and prompted reprisals from Christian militias.

Russia sent plane loads of weapons and dozens of contractors last year to train CAR soldiers and secure mining projects, marking the start of its highest-profile military foray in sub-Saharan Africa for decades.

Includes reporting from Reuters. ☒

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