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Kremlin Voices 'Serious Concern' Over C.Africa Crisis

By AFP

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The Kremlin voiced "serious concern" about events in CAR. **Valery Matytsin / TASS**

The Kremlin said Monday it was closely following the crisis unfolding in the Central African Republic after the government alleged an attempted coup ahead of elections this week.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov however did not comment on reports earlier Monday that Russia had dispatched "hundreds" of troops to the impoverished country.

"We are of course monitoring and analyzing the situation," Peskov told reporters, describing the crisis as "a cause for serious concern."

The Russian Foreign and Defense Ministries did not provide an immediate comment on reports of the troop deployment when reached by AFP.

The Central African Republic said Monday that Russia and Rwanda had sent in hundreds of

troops after an alleged coup bid ahead of weekend presidential and parliamentary polls.

The government in the deeply unstable country on Saturday accused former president Francois Bozize of an attempted putsch after three powerful rebel groups merged and started to advance on the capital Bangui.

"Russia has sent several hundred soldiers and heavy weapons" in the framework of a bilateral cooperation agreement, government spokesman Ange Maxime Kazagui said.

During the Soviet Union, Moscow supported a number of client states in Africa.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has sought to expand its footprint on the continent, with analysts pointing to the presence in several countries of the pro-Kremlin mercenary group Wagner.

Moscow has been leading a vast diplomatic and financial offensive in the former French colony since 2018 in return for major concessions to Russian companies for the exploitation of minerals, particularly gold and diamonds.

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