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Russia Says 'Not Sending Troops' to C.Africa

By AFP

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Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov on Monday rejected a claim that the country had sent troops to the Central African Republic after an alleged attempted coup.

"We are not sending troops, we are complying with all UN resolutions," the Interfax news agency cited Bogdanov as saying.

The CAR government said earlier Monday that Russia, along with Rwanda, had sent in hundreds of troops after three powerful rebel groups merged and started to advance on the capital Bangui.

While Bodganov denied that Russia was deploying troops in CAR, he noted that it has previously sent military instructors to the troubled country under a cooperation agreement.

"So our people are there, naturally," he added.

Earlier, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not comment about the CAR claim on the troop deployment, although he described the political crisis there as a "cause for serious concern".

When reached by AFP the Russian defense ministry did not give an immediate comment.

The deputy foreign minister also told Interfax that CAR's presidential election would take place as planned on December 27, despite "destructive forces" trying to "disrupt" them.

Russia in recent years has sought to increase its clout in Africa, with analysts pointing to the presence in several countries of the pro-Kremlin mercenary group Wagner.

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

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