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# Russia Sent '300 Military Instructors' to C.Africa – Ministry

By AFP

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The Russian military instructors will "train the military personnel of the national army" in CAR. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow said Tuesday it had dispatched 300 Russian military instructors to the Central African Republic at the CAR's request after an alleged attempted coup ahead of upcoming elections.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said Russia had "promptly responded" to a request and sent "an additional 300 instructors to train the military personnel of the national army" under the terms of an existing cooperation agreement.

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On Monday the CAR government said 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

at the weekend.

The advance was halted and in some places pushed back and the situation was "under control," the UN peacekeeping force in the CAR, known as MINUSCA, said late Sunday.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said it was "seriously concerned that the events of recent days have led to a sharp degradation of the security situation" in the CAR.

The actions of the three rebel groups had been "well coordinated and fed from the outside" and aimed at "disrupting the electoral process," it said.

On Monday, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov denied that Moscow had sent troops to CAR, although he noted that Russian military instructors were already there under the existing bilateral deal.

He insisted the CAR's presidential elections would take place as planned on Dec. 27, despite "destructive forces" trying to "disrupt" them.

The Kremlin has led a diplomatic and financial offensive in the deeply troubled CAR since 2018 in return for concessions to Russian companies to exploit the country's mineral wealth, especially gold and diamonds.

The strategy has been seen in the context of a Russian bid to expand its influence in Africa, where the former Soviet Union used arms sales and military training to wield clout in the Cold War.

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