

Russia Pulling 'Military Instructors' Out of Central African Republic

By [AFP](#)

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Russia deployed 300 "military instructors" to the Central African Republic ahead of controversial elections last year. **EPA**

Russia told the United Nations this week it plans to withdraw the 300 "military instructors" it sent to the Central African Republic at the end of 2020 for the presidential election, diplomats told AFP Friday.

"The Russians have informed the UN that they will withdraw the troops and helicopters" which had been deployed to the Central African Republic during the election at the end of December, a diplomat said, on condition of anonymity.

News of the withdrawal was passed to the UN Sanctions Committee responsible for monitoring the arms embargo imposed on the CAR, said another diplomat.

In addition to several hundred "instructors," [Moscow had also deployed](#) three or four

transport helicopters.

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The announcement of the Russian military withdrawal was made before the attacks carried out Wednesday on the outskirts of Bangui, and questions remained at the UN as to whether Moscow will confirm the departure of the military in light of those latest events.

The Russian mission to the UN made no comment on the development.

After having denied sending "regular forces" to the CAR, as Bangui had asserted, Russia finally acknowledged last month the deployment of at least "300 additional military instructors."

This term is often used to refer to paramilitaries from the Russian private security company Wagner, which is close to the Kremlin.

The objective was to "help" the CAR "to strengthen its defensive capacities" in the run-up to the elections, the Russian authorities explained at the time.

According to many witnesses and aid workers, these "instructors" went to the front lines to fight the rebels.

According to UN sources, the coordination on the ground between UN peacekeepers, the Russian "military instructors" and the 300 Rwandan soldiers also sent as reinforcements in December on a bilateral basis, turned out to be "pretty good."

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One of the sources said the coordination was an attempt to avoid "friendly fire" between the different forces, "to know who was where and who was doing what," adding that "the Rwandans and the Russians have helped a lot."

At Bangui's request, the Security Council, which met behind closed doors Wednesday to discuss the situation in the country, has scheduled a new meeting on January 21 which will be public, diplomats said.

The CAR authorities want to use the opportunity to demand a lifting of the arms embargo, even on a temporary basis, to better fight rebels who still control large swathes of the country, according to a letter to the UN obtained by AFP.

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