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Russia to Invest $11B in Volatile Central African Republic's Reconstruction – Minister

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Russia's increased presence in the CAR comes amid a wider military and financial push across the African continent in exchange for mining rights. **Mohamed Sheikh Nor / AP / TASS**

Russia could invest $11 billion in reconstruction projects in the mineral-rich Central African Republic, where rebel violence has led to mass displacement and Russian mercenaries are widely reported to be providing security services to the embattled military, a government official has said.

Moscow has since 2018 expanded its diplomatic and financial activities in the former French colony in exchange for major concessions in the country's mining sector, particularly gold and diamonds.

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Russian construction firms are interested in investing in the CAR “because we are a country in reconstruction,” Pascal Bida Koyagbélé, CAR's minister in charge of strategic investments, told Russian state media Friday.

“We have road projects worth about $6 billion, a $3 billion rail project and we also need to build a new city, which will cost $2 billion,” Koyagbélé told the French-language edition of the Kremlin-funded Sputnik news organization.

“We are in discussions with the Russian state, with public and private banks, to have a financing advantage. We have plenty of guarantees to offer, including mining guarantees,” Koyagbélé added.

Koyagbélé visited Moscow on April 19, where he and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov discussed trade, economic and investment cooperation, according to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

He and Bogdanov addressed “the possibilities of involving interested Russian economic operators in projects to develop mineral resources, energy, infrastructure and agricultural projects in the CAR.”

United Nations experts last month expressed concern over reports of mass summary executions, forced civilian displacement and other rights abuses allegedly committed by Russian mercenaries in the CAR.

The UN estimates that more than 30,000 people have fled the CAR due to violence surrounding the December elections, while tens of thousands more have been internally displaced.

The surge in recent months is the latest flare-up in an eight-year civil war that broke out after the rebel ouster of one of the CAR’s previous presidents.

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