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EU Readying New Sanctions for Kremlin-Linked Wagner Mercenary Group

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Zuma / TASS

The European Union is readying new sanctions for Wagner, the Russian mercenary group with alleged links to the Kremlin, France's foreign minister said Monday.

"There's a common desire to draft a legal framework for sanctions against Wagner," Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Jean-Yves Le Drian as telling reporters in Brussels.

Wagner has been reported to be involved in conflicts in Ukraine, Africa and the Middle East in recent years.

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Le Drian added that the measures will target both Wagner itself and figures that work with it.

The announcement followed discussions by EU member-states' foreign ministers on the situation in Mali, the conflict-ridden state battling intercommunal violence and jihadist

attacks since 2013.

With France preparing to close its military bases in Mali, reports have suggested that Mali's military junta was in talks to deploy 1,000 Wagner fighters in the country — a deal fiercely opposed by Paris.

Le Drian accused Wagner of carrying out "destabilization" in Mali "on behalf of its clients."

Also on Monday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that the sanction proposals will now be drafted by European Union experts and discussed further when foreign ministers meet again in December.

Moscow has vowed to continue military cooperation with Mali but denied any links to Russian private military contractors in the country.

Already last year, the EU blacklisted Wagner's alleged financier Yevgeny Prigozhin, a close ally of Russia's President Vladimir Putin, over the group's involvement in Libya.

The Kremlin denies any links to Wagner.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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