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U.S. Warns Russia's Wagner Group Against Mali Meddling

By AFP

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France has been spearheading moves to target Wagner after its reported deal with Mali's military junta to send 1,000 contractors to help in a longstanding conflict with jihadists. **Andrew Harnik / POOL / AFP**

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday warned the shadowy Russian mercenary group Wagner over involvement in Mali as he pressed for a civilian transition in the troubled country.

On a visit to Senegal, Blinken said that the United States was "contributing to efforts with Mali and partners in support of stability" in the war-ravaged country.

"I would only add that I think it would be especially unfortunate if outside actors engage in making things even more difficult and more complicated, and I'm thinking in particular of the Wagner group," he said.

The private military outfit, which Western capitals see as closely linked to the Kremlin, has

been tied to conflicts in Ukraine, Africa and the Middle East.

France has been spearheading moves to target Wagner after its reported deal with Mali's military junta to send 1,000 contractors to help in a longstanding conflict with jihadists.

West African regional group ECOWAS earlier this month slapped sanctions on individual members of the military junta ruling Mali since the August 2020 seizure of power.

Blinken said that he agreed with Senegalese leaders on holding Mali to its pledge to transition to democracy and promised that the United States would offer benefits for such a move.

"As soon as the democraticly elected government takes office, the international community stands ready to support Mali," Blinken said.

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