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Chad President Heads to Moscow for Talks With Putin

By AFP

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Chad's transitional president General Mahamat Idriss Deby. **Paul Kagame / flickr**

Chad's transitional president General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno embarked Tuesday on an official visit to Russia "at the invitation" of President Vladimir Putin, the two states announced.

Deby "left [the capital of Chad] N'Djamena this morning for Moscow at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin," the Chad presidency said on its Facebook page.

The Kremlin confirmed the visit and said the two leaders would meet Wednesday to discuss "perspectives for the development of Russian-Chadian relations in different areas along with current regional and international issues."

Chad, where the French army still retains a military contingent, is France's last close partner in the North African Sahel region following the forced withdrawal of French troops from Mali

in August 2022, Burkina Faso in February 2023 and Niger in December.

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Those three countries have since all moved closer to Russia, especially militarily following the end of Operation Barkhane, which ran from 2014 to 2022 and saw France lead a military counterinsurgency against Islamic insurgents in the Sahel.

Russia, namely through mercenaries of the Wagner private military outfit, is also present and influential in the Central African Republic, Libya and Sudan, which border Chad.

Mahamat Deby was proclaimed head of an army junta two years ago after rebels killed his father Idriss Deby Itno, who had seized power in a coup and ruled the desert nation with an iron fist for three decades.

Chad's army is generally regarded as a mainstay of the anti-jihadist fight in the region.

The transitional regime under the general has indicated that presidential elections will be held by the end of this year, having been urged by the international community to stick to an initial pledge to hold elections within 18 months.

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