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Niger Receives New Russian Advisers, Equipment

By AFP

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Protesters display Russian and Nigerien flags during a march for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Niger in Niamey, Niger, April 13, 2024. **EPA/ISSIFOU DJIBO/TASS**

New Russian military advisers and military equipment have arrived in Niger, according to state television in the African country that wants U.S. forces to leave.

A first set of about 100 Russian advisers had arrived in Niger on April 10 along with air defense systems.

Two military transporters arrived Saturday, according to Tele Sahel that said Russia has now sent three cargo planes of military material and instructors in the past month.

The Africa Corps, seen as the successors of the Wagner paramilitary group in Africa, confirmed the instructors' arrival in a posting on the group's Telegram account.

On Saturday, it said more trainers, equipment, and food products had arrived.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin indicated Thursday that Russian troops were now installed at a Nigerien air base near the Niamey airport that also houses U.S. troops.

Niger's military regime, which took power in a July 2023 coup, expelled French troops based in the country and then denounced a military cooperation agreement with the United States. It said this had been "unilaterally imposed" by Washington.

Washington agreed in April to withdraw its roughly 1,000 soldiers in the country.

Negotiations are underway between the United States and Niger about the the withdrawal.

U.S. forces have a key drone base near Agadez, built at a cost of about $100 million.

Niger's military leaders have moved closer to Russia, as have neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso which also have military coup leaders and are fighting rebel groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

In April, Idrissa Soumana Maiga, head of the private L'Enqueteur newspaper, was imprisoned after an article mentioned the "presumed" installation of Russian listening devices in official buildings.

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