

# Wagner Group Confirms Fighters Killed Battling Mali Rebels

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The Wagner mercenary group [confirmed](#) Monday that some of its fighters were killed alongside soldiers from Mali's army as they battled against rebel forces in recent days.

The rebel movement, the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD), [said](#) in a statement on Saturday that its troops "decisively obliterated" the Wagner-backed Malian army and took the remaining survivors as prisoners.

AFP cited a local official and a former worker at the UN mission in the town of Kidal as saying that at least 15 Wagner fighters were killed or captured as the Malian army retreated.

Wagner issued a rare statement on Monday detailing "fierce battles" with militants — which it said lasted from July 22 to July 27 and resulted in a series of tactical victories followed by losses.

"The radicals increased the number of mass attacks, using heavy weapons, UAVs and shahid-

mobiles,” the private military group said in the statement. It added that the last radio message it received from the assault detachment involved in the fighting came on Saturday.

According to Wagner, that message read: “Three of us are left, we’re continuing to fight.” The mercenary group did not say how many of its fighters were believed to have been killed.

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The Baza Telegram news channel, which has purported links to Russian security services, previously [reported](#) that at least 20 Wagner fighters were killed in the fighting. Mali’s army claimed two of its soldiers had been killed and 10 injured.

The West African nation’s military leaders, who seized power in a 2020 coup, have prioritized retaking all of the country from separatist and jihadist forces, particularly in the town of Kidal. A junta led by Colonel Assimi Goita broke the country’s traditional alliance with former colonial power France in favor of Russia.

Large-scale fighting broke out on Thursday between the army and separatists in the border town of Tinzaouatene after the Mali army announced it had retaken control of several districts. The district is almost entirely surrounded by Algerian territory and has been at the heart of other battles between separatist forces and the national army over the past decade.

AFP reported over the weekend that it received videos from a separatist spokesman, showing several bodies lying on the ground that were believed to be those of Wagner mercenaries and army soldiers.

The Malian army rarely reports on its losses and pressure from the ruling junta along with armed groups has silenced most independent sources of information in the areas of fighting.

Wagner resumed recruiting fighters for deployment in Africa after the death of its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin in August 2023. According to Baza, the Wagner fighters killed and captured in Mali had been stationed there since 2021.

*AFP contributed reporting.*

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