

Russian Foreign Ministry Accuses Ukraine of Opening 'Second Front' in Africa

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Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova. **Sergei Konkov / Roscongress Photobank**

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman on Wednesday accused Ukraine of opening a "second front" in Africa after Mali and Niger broke off diplomatic relations with Kyiv.

"Unable to defeat Russia on the battlefield, the criminal regime of Volodymyr Zelensky has opened a second front in Africa," spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told the RIA Novosti news agency.

Zakharova accused Ukraine of "pandering to terrorist groups in countries on the continent friendly to Moscow."

Tuareg-led separatists have said they killed 84 fighters from Russia's Wagner mercenary group and 47 Malian soldiers in an attack last month in northern Mali.

Mali accused a senior Ukrainian official of having admitted Kyiv's role in the attack and broke

off diplomatic relations on August 5.

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Mali government spokesman Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga said the government was shocked to learn of remarks by Andriy Yusov, spokesman for Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency.

Yusov had "admitted Ukraine's involvement in a cowardly, treacherous and barbaric attack by armed terrorist groups" that led to the deaths of Malian soldiers, Maiga said.

Speaking on Ukrainian television, Yusov said the whole world was aware that the rebels "had received the necessary data that allowed them to carry out their operation against the Russian war criminals."

Niger said Tuesday it too was cutting diplomatic ties with Ukraine "with immediate effect."

Referring to the same attack in Mali, Niger said it would ask the UN Security Council to debate Ukraine's "aggression," government spokesman Amadou Abdramane said in a televised statement.

Niger and Mali are both run by military governments that took power in recent coups, going on to rip up defense agreements with France and turn to Russia for military help.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said Monday that Kyiv "unconditionally adheres to the norms of international law" and "firmly rejects the accusations of the transitional government of Mali," adding that it regretted Bamako's "hasty" decision.

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