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# Niger Invites Russian Firms to Mine Uranium, Other Resources

By AFP

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A Nigerien Soldier walks outside France's state-owned nuclear giant Areva's uranium mine in Arlit. **Issouf Sanogo / AFP**

Niger's government wants Russian firms to invest in uranium and other natural resource production, its mining minister said on Wednesday, amid worsening relations with its former colonial ruler France.

French nuclear group Orano suspended uranium production in Niger last month. The move came after the country's military junta, which seized power in July 2023, revoked a permit for one of the largest uranium deposits in the world.

"We have already met with Russian companies that are interested in coming to explore and exploit Niger's natural resources... not only uranium," Niger's Mining Minister Ousmane Abarchi told the state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

"With regards to French companies, the French government, via its head of state, has said it does not recognize the Niger authorities," Abarchi said. "Does it seem possible in this case that we, the State of Niger, accept that French companies continue to exploit our natural resources?"

His comments come as several West African countries recently downgraded their historical ties with France, turning instead toward Russia and other countries for strategic partnerships.

Niger's military rulers have vowed to revamp rules regulating the mining of raw materials by foreign companies in what is the world's seventh-largest uranium producer.

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