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Kremlin Calls for Stability in Mali as Rebels Seize Kidal and Target Capital

April 28, 2026



Africa Corps / VK

The Kremlin said Tuesday it is seeking an urgent return to peace and stability in Mali as Russia's Defense Ministry warned that rebel forces had captured a key northern town and were "regrouping" for fresh attacks.

Russia's Africa Corps was forced to retreat from the town of Kidal over the weekend following coordinated strikes by Al-Qaeda-linked militants and Tuareg separatists.

The surprise offensive targeted strategic positions held by Mali's Moscow-backed military junta. The central government's defense minister was killed in attacks, and Assimi Goïta, Mali's junta leader, is reportedly in hiding.

"We consider it important that the country return to a peaceful, stable course as soon as possible," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

When asked about Goïta's current status or whereabouts, Peskov directed inquiries to Malian

authorities, stating that such information "needs to be searched for in Mali, not in the Kremlin."

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In a separate statement, Russia's Defense Ministry described the situation as "challenging" but maintained that Africa Corps soldiers "continue to carry out their missions and are prepared to repel further insurgent activity."

The ministry acknowledged "attempts to seize key facilities" in the capital, Bamako, including the presidential palace. It said that Africa Corps units faced "numerically superior forces" and engaged in over 24 hours of combat before withdrawing from Kidal.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Borisenko said Tuesday that Russian troops had "suffered casualties" in "strikes on many parts of the country," according to state media.

Analysts describe the current offensive as the most significant threat to Mali's central government since 2012, when French troops stationed in the country helped the military junta defend against rebel attacks.

Since expelling France in 2022, Mali's central government has turned to Russia as its primary political and military backer.

AFP contributed reporting.

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