

# Potential Deployment of the Wagner Group in Mali - United States

## Department of State

*Ned Price, Department Spokesperson*

4 minutes

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### Press Statement

December 15, 2021

We are alarmed by a potential deployment of Russia-backed Wagner Group forces in Mali. We understand that the reported deal — costing \$10 million per month — diverts money that could be used to support the Malian Armed Forces and public services to pay for the deployment of Yevgeniy Prigozhin's Wagner Group forces to Mali. Wagner forces — which are known for their destabilizing activities and human rights abuses — will not bring peace to Mali, but rather will destabilize the country further.

Yevgeniy Prigozhin is sanctioned by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union in connection with his dealings with the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense and his efforts to subvert U.S. democratic processes. The Wagner Group, which is also sanctioned by the United States, has been implicated in abuses and actions that threaten the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic (CAR). For example, in CAR, Wagner

elements carried out extrajudicial killings of members of predominantly Muslim Peuhl communities.

The EU sanctioned the Wagner group and 11 of its associates on December 13 for its destabilizing activities in Ukraine, Libya, CAR, and Syria.

Countries that experience Wagner group deployments within their borders soon find themselves poorer, weaker, and less secure. The cases of Libya, CAR, Ukraine, and Syria are examples of the detrimental impact of Wagner Group deployments.

In these places Wagner forces stoked conflict and increased insecurity and instability, causing the deaths of local soldiers and civilians and undermining national sovereignty — all while depleting the national treasury and diverting essential resources that could have been used to build the capabilities of the countries' own armed services.

We urge the transitional government in Mali not to divert scarce budgetary resources away from the Malian Armed Forces' fight against terrorism. The wealth of the country — including mining concessions — should benefit the Malian people, and not be mortgaged to unaccountable foreign forces with a record of abusing local populations and undermining host nations' control over their own territory.

Furthermore, the invitation to Wagner Group would disrupt efforts by the international community to support the fight against terrorism and could put at risk the contributions of more than 20,000 international peacekeepers and troops who serve Mali at no cost to the people or government.

The United States laments that Mali's transitional government has refused to accept more than 2,000 additional MINUSMA

military and police peacekeepers — again, at no cost to Mali — that would have contributed to civilian protection. The United States also regrets that the transitional government has delayed efforts by international partners to deploy additional troops and trainers and to bolster security operations. We call on the transitional government to take action to facilitate responsible and accountable security assistance efforts aimed at protecting and empowering the Malian people.

We also call on the transitional government to move rapidly to return Mali to democratic governance, which will allow the United States to resume security assistance that benefits the Malian people.