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Africa-Russia

# Putin transforms Wagner in Africa

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### **Five months after Prigozhin's death, the Russian mercenary company Wagner in Africa is being transformed.**

The Wagner company has enabled Russia to regain a foothold on a continent that has long been neglected. It is active in Libya, Mali, Sudan, the Central African Republic and more recently in Burkina Faso and perhaps soon in Niger.

## Trojan horse

Its presence has only very recently been officially recognised. Wagner has enabled the Kremlin to establish a military presence without assuming the political responsibilities and financial burdens. Because mercenary activity goes hand in hand with the plundering of natural resources. These can be gold in Sudan, logs and diamonds in the Central African Republic, oil in Libya, or payments by the authorities, as in Mali.

As soon as Prigozhin's death was announced, the Russian Ministry of Defence organised tours of Africa with a twofold objective. To reassure African officials of the durability of their military presence and to reorganise the troops on the ground.

In the open

Moscow had the choice between putting a new oligarch in charge or integrating Wagner into the Russian army. According to the neo-conservative US think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, the latter option was chosen. Putin has entrusted Yunus-bek Evkourov, Deputy Defence Minister, with the creation of an "Africa Corps" attached to the army.

This new configuration will make it possible to avoid too great a margin of autonomy and, above all, to respond to the new political situation in Africa. There is no longer any point in Russia moving forward in disguise. The widespread but very real anti-Western sentiment allows Moscow to present itself as an alternative in a direct confrontation with Western countries opened up by the war in Ukraine. As Igor Korotchenko, the army's unofficial spokesman, was quoted by the NGO All Eyes On Wagner as saying: "For the Kremlin, the main opponents on the dark continent are the United States and its NATO allies, including France. The Russian military department will counter Western influence and strengthen Moscow's position in Africa".

## No supreme saviour

In Burkina Faso, where some fifty Russian soldiers recently landed, the modus operandi has not changed. It is a mixture of military and civilian presence, with the "African Initiative" association extolling the benefits of the saviours. As Korotchenko puts it:

The use of force in Africa should bring Russia not only political benefits (bringing friendly governments and regimes to power) and military benefits (renting out bases, airfields and logistics centres free of charge), but also economic dividends (control over deposits of gold, platinum, cobalt, uranium, diamonds, oil and rare earths, and their development on mutually advantageous terms with African partners).

A perfect definition of imperialism in Africa.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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