



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on August 14, 2023

EU to Impose Sanctions on New Military Government in Niger, U.S. Pressures Niger Against Russian Influence

The European Union (EU) is preparing to enforce sanctions on the new military government in Niger, according to European sources who told Reuters on August 9.

An EU diplomat and an official who were engaged in crafting the sanctions confirmed that the alliance was coming up with punitive criteria for the “undermining of democracy” in Niger.

The formula would most likely be agreed upon soon, the official told the news outlet.

“The next step would be sanctions against individual members of the military government, said to be responsible for the ousting of former president Mohamed Bazoum last month,” the diplomat said.

Although no date has been given for when these sanctions might take effect, foreign ministers from the bloc’s 27 countries are scheduled to discuss potential measures as well as other Niger-related issues when they convene in Toledo on August 31.

Thus far, the EU has halted security and financial support for Niger after last month’s seizure of power by a military faction led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, depriving the country of hundreds of thousands of euros in aid. Moreover, the United States and Canada have also suspended some assistance schemes, with several European countries — led by France, the former colonial ruler of Niger, also isolating the country. Besides, the World Bank has terminated public-sector payments to Niger.

The African nation also dropped in the ranks of credit rating agency Moody’s, days after the country prohibited uranium and gold exports to France, depriving the latter from the world’s seventh-largest producer of the nuclear mineral — and the second-largest supplier to the EU.

Domestically, it seems that Nigeriens largely supported the coup, based on a recent survey by *The Economist*: 78 percent were in favor of the takeover, while 73 percent wanted their new leaders to retain power “for an extended period” or “until new elections are held.”

Niger’s new military government has vowed to defend the country against any foreign attack. One of the junta’s leaders, General Salifou Moody, reportedly sought assistance from Russian defense contractor [Wagner Group PMC](#), which has operated in Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Mozambique, and the Central African Republic. The junta has closed the country’s airspace “until further notice.”

With France ousted from Niger by the latter’s new military government, the U.S. government has felt that its interests have been threatened, especially if the new Niger government leans toward Russia more and more.



AP Images

Coup supporters hold Russian and Nigerian flags in Niger



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U.S. Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Victoria Nuland demanded to speak to the ousted president, but was denied the chance to do so. Rather, Nuland met with one of the coup leaders — the new army chief of staff, Brigadier General Moussa Salaou Barmou.

In a recent State Department teleconference, Nuland said that she was in Niger “because we wanted to speak frankly to the people responsible for this challenge to the democratic order.”

“We met with the self-proclaimed chief of defense of this operation, General Barmou, and three of the colonels supporting him,” Nuland [said](#). “I will say that these conversations were extremely frank and at times quite difficult because, again, we were pushing for a negotiated solution.”

According to the U.S. official, she “raised the [issue of] Wagner and its threat to those countries where it is present.” While her counterparts did not make any firm commitments, she said she believed they understood her message.

“I got the sense in my meetings today that the people who have taken this action here understand very well the risks to their sovereignty when Wagner is invited in,” Nuland elaborated.

However, despite speaking to her hosts about the risks of foreign interference, Nuland has an established track record of attempting to interfere with the affairs of other countries. In 2014, she was discovered in Ukraine handing out cookies to anti-government protesters and caught red-handed discussing the potential roles of Ukrainian opposition leaders post-regime change. Additionally, Nuland’s husband, Robert Kagan, is a prominent figure described on the U.S. State Department website as an expert on “NATO expansion.” He also co-founded the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) [think tank](#), which set out the roadmap for U.S. regime-change wars against countries that do not comply with Washington’s globalist goals.

Moreover, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a West African regional partnership, also came up with a blueprint for military intervention in Niger, giving the new government until Sunday to reinstate former leader Mohamed Bazoum. Governments part of ECOWAS have decreed that the region’s armies immediately activate standby troops for a possible intervention in Niger.

“No option is taken off the table, including the use of force as a last resort,” Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said on Thursday after hosting a meeting of ECOWAS heads of state in Abuja. He added, “I hope that through our collective effort, we can bring about a peaceful resolution as a roadmap to restoring stability and democracy in Niger. All is not lost yet.” In turn, the new government has refused to acquiesce to ECOWAS’ demands.

However, that deadline has passed without the threatened invasion, as ECOWAS is reportedly unprepared for a full-scale military intervention, according to senior military sources in interviews with *The Wall Street Journal*.

Neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali have warned ECOWAS against military intervention, stating this would “amount to a declaration of war” on both countries and provoke self-defensive responses. Bazoum, currently imprisoned, has called for Washington to intervene, before all of the Sahel “fall to Russian influence” — despite a lack of substantial proof that Moscow was involved in the coup.

In their blueprint, ECOWAS failed to indicate the size of the intervention force or which member states would participate in a possible intervention. African Freedom Institute President [Franklin Nyamsi](#) said in a Russia Today interview that the bloc could incite “a world African war” if it tries to eradicate



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Niger's military government by force.

Nigeria, Senegal, and Ivory Coast are among the ECOWAS members that have demanded a restoration of Niger's former government. Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara slammed the detention of Bazoum under house arrest as a "terrorist act."

At a summit in Abuja, Ouattara told reporters, "We do not accept, we will not accept *coups d'état*. These putschists must go. If they don't let Bazoum out to be able to exercise his mandate, I think we should move ahead and get them out."

In a [statement](#) published recently, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington stands with ECOWAS in calling on Niger's military government to step down, stressing the need for political stability and "social cohesion."

"We echo the ECOWAS condemnation of the illegal detention of President Mohamed Bazoum, his family, and members of the government, as well as the unacceptable conditions under which they are being held, and call for their immediate release," the diplomat said, alluding to Niger's ousted head of state.

While Blinken indicated that U.S. officials hoped ECOWAS would "explore all options for the peaceful resolution of the crisis," his remarks came after the West African bloc said it would begin organizing military forces to restore Bazoum to power.

The United States also announced that it will halt some of its foreign assistance projects in Niger, with the State Department saying such aid hinges on "democratic governance" in the African nation after the coup.

Blinken pointed out that certain programs "benefiting the government of Niger" would be put on hold as U.S. officials review "the situation on the ground" given the recent bout of unrest.

"As we have made clear since the outset of this situation, the provision of US assistance to the government of Niger depends on democratic governance and respect for constitutional order," Blinken said, reiterating a prior plea for "the immediate restoration of Niger's democratically-elected government." Washington currently maintains around 1,000 troops in Niger.

On its end, Russia's Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov warned that any interference in Niger by powers outside the region would be unlikely to improve the situation, wishing that Niger would revert back to "constitutional normality."



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