

Niger: Demonstrators take to the streets in protest against foreign forces

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Photo: Sam Mednick

Hundreds of demonstrators took part in a protest against the presence of foreign forces in Niger, including the armed forces of the United States, which has a military base in the north of the country.

The demonstrators gathered in the center of the capital city of Niamey at the call of civil society organizations close to Niger's ruling military junta, whose members took part in the demonstration.

"We have called for the departure of the Americans and all foreign forces from Niger, and the CNSP (acronym for the organization of the military junta of Niger) has taken our concerns into account, and it is in this context that we have come to support and reaffirm our support for the CNSP in relation to the decision taken for the departure of foreign forces," said Abdoulaziz Yaya, a protester.

The demonstration comes as the West African nation moves away from close cooperation with the United States in counterterrorism efforts, turning instead to Russia for security.

It may be seen as a further step in urging Washington to withdraw from Niger - where Russian troops arrived last week to provide security for Niger's ruling junta.

"The Russians will be here as part of a win-win cooperation, whereas the Americans, as we've seen, have been here for how many years? Has insecurity weakened? I'd say not. Whereas with the Russians, we've just recently seen that things are moving forward," said Moumouni Amadou Gado, who helped organize the demonstration.

Niger's ruling military council, known as the CNSP, has yet to order American troops out, U.S. officials have said.

But the arrival of Russian forces makes it complicated for the U.S. forces, along with diplomatic and civilian personnel, to remain in the country.

It also throws into doubt the future of joint Niger-U.S. counterinsurgency operations.

Until recently, Washington considered Niger a key partner and ally in a region swept by coups in recent years, investing millions of dollars in an airbase in a desert area that served as the heart of American counterinsurgency operations in Africa's sub-Saharan region known as the Sahel.

The U.S. also invested heavily in training Niger's forces to beat back insurgencies by militants linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, which ravaged the country and its neighbors.

But last summer, some of those elite U.S.-trained forces took part in a coup that ousted the elected president.

Since then, relations between Niger's new leaders and Washington have deteriorated.

The junta has criticized the U.S. for warning Niger against cooperating with Russia and Iran, saying it was trying to force the African nation to choose between partners.

Source: [Africa News](#)

