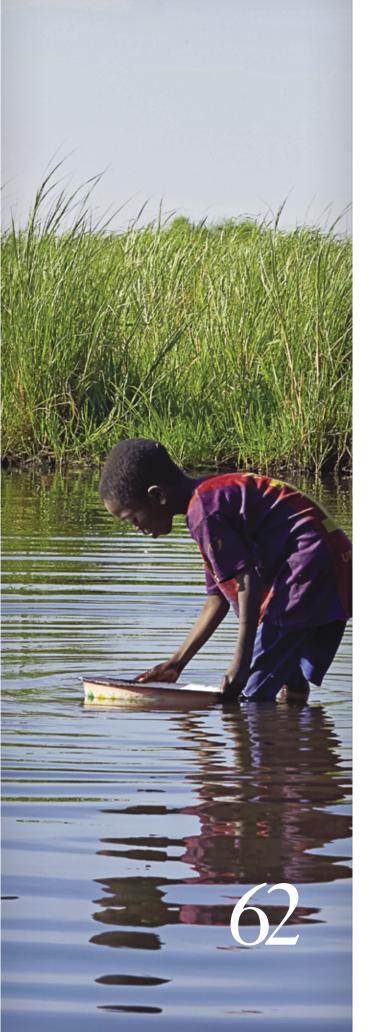




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ON THE COVER:

Foreign fighters are involved in multiple conflicts on the African continent, but the true powers controlling them often remain invisible.

ADF ILLUSTRATION



rivate security should come with a warning label: Buyer beware.

Private military companies (PMCs) can be valuable when they play a supporting role. Militaries hire them to transport troops and equipment or to beef up security at areas of national interest. Oil and gas companies often hire them to patrol installations.

At their best, they offer a relatively low-cost solution to a security challenge. When held to high standards of professionalism, they can be an asset.

But some PMCs come with hidden agendas.

Globally, there is a worrying trend of foreign powers using PMCs or mercenaries as a way to exert influence and gain wealth. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in Africa. One of the most notorious examples is the Wagner Group, headed by a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The group's strategy is to provide muscular security to help autocratic regimes hold onto power. In return, Wagner is given access to precious natural resources and, in the process, the Russian government gains a political ally.

But nations pay a heavy price when Wagner gets involved.

In Libya, Wagner forces supporting Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar have fanned the flames of violence and committed war crimes in the hope of gaining access to oil wealth. In Sudan, Wagner-linked operatives are accused of propping up former dictator Omar al-Bashir in exchange for gold mining rights. In the Central African Republic, Wagner fighters are accused of torture and extrajudicial killings. And in at least five African countries, the group is credibly linked to online efforts to meddle in national elections.

In these cases, they are not providing security — they are undermining it. It is incumbent upon African governments to demand the highest standards of professionalism and transparency from the security companies they do business with. Under strict guidance, some private companies can be helpful. But when left unchecked, PMCs can bring instability and unwanted foreign influence. When this occurs, the supposed security "solution" they offer isn't worth the cost.

U.S. Africa Command Staff





Mercenaries

Volume 14, Quarter 3

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND



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A Vision of a New African Trade Model

Wamkele Mene, secretary-general of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, spoke on January 1, 2021, at the AfCFTA Start of Trading Ceremony Webinar. His comments have been edited to fit this format.



Leaders attended an African Union summit in Kigali, Rwanda, to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area in March 2018. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Truly today is a historic day, a day in which we start officially trading under the preferences of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Today is a day we take Africa a step closer to a vision of an integrated market on the African continent.

This AfCFTA should not just be a trade agreement; it should actually be an instrument for Africa's development. In this regard, we have seen the World Bank produce a report that projects that by 2035, if we implement this agreement effectively, we have the opportunity to lift out of poverty 100 million Africans. And the majority of this 100 million are women in trade. It will be the opportunity to close the gender income gap, and the opportunity for SMEs [small and medium enterprises] to access new markets.

We are working very closely with our technical partners to develop digital technology platforms that will enable connectivity of SMEs and enable connectivity of young Africans in trade.

This agreement does not benefit only the big corporations on the African continent, but it should always be

inclusive of young Africans, women and African SMEs.

Today, as Africans, we are witnessing the beginning of a new chapter in terms of trade and investment relations.

I'm truly proud today because 54 countries have signed this agreement, 33 have ratified it, over 40 have submitted their tariff offers. This is a strong signal that Africa is ready to start trading today on the basis of new rules and preferences that will ensure that the African market is integrated.

We have to take active steps to overcome the smallness of our respective national economies. We have to take active steps to overcome the lack of economies of scale. We have to take active steps to make sure that we place Africa on the path of industrial development so that by the year 2035, we're able to double intra-Africa trade with value-added goods.

As I observed in the past, we have to take active steps to dismantle the colonial economic model that we inherited and that has been sustained over the past 60 years. We have to stop being exporters of primary products to countries of the North. We have to create jobs on the African continent by developing our regional value chains and be self-sufficient in our own continental production.

In 2020, COVID-19 has demonstrated that Africa is overly reliant on global supply chains, and when these global chains are disrupted. Africa suffers.

So we have to take active steps to make sure this industrial development is accelerated, and this AfCFTA and the launch of trading today are the first steps we take in that direction.

I want you, Africans, to join me as we take this historic step to the vision of an integrated Africa, the Africa we want.



'SEEDBALLS' GIVE KENYA'S FORESTS A HELPING HAND

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

he round black pellets easily could be mistaken for animal dung. But they contain acacia seeds that help regrow Kenya's depleted forests.

Mara Elephant Project rangers have scattered 22,000 "seedballs" around an illegally cleared corner of the Nyakweri forest bordering the Masai Mara wildlife preserve to give nature a chance to regenerate.

The forests have been chipped away for pasture, crops and charcoal. Nyakweri has lost more than 50% of its forest cover in the past two decades, according to Marc Goss, director of the project. Goss and his team have been spreading seedballs for three years.

Forests cover just 7% of Kenya's land and are water reserves and a bulwark against desertification. Kenya loses 5,000 hectares of forest a year, the environment ministry said in 2018.

Developed by Seedballs Kenya, the charcoal dust casing protects the seed from being eaten before it germinates. The semiporous shell gives it a fighting chance even in arid conditions.

"You can throw them out year-round," said Teddy Kinyanjui, co-founder of Seedballs Kenya. "It would sit there, wait for the rain to come, it washes the dust away, and then the seed is back to its natural state and will be able to start growing."

Seedballs contain indigenous species, mainly varieties of acacias, the classic tree of the East African savanna, but one much sought after and felled for the quality of its wood.

Smallholder farmers wanting a cheap way to green their land buy seedballs, and major buyers donate 500 kilograms at a time to groups working in reforestation.

The company has sold 13 million seedballs since launching in mid-2016.

The germination rate is low, and some seeds can hibernate for years, making visible gains long in the making, Kinyanjui said. Only about 5% to 10% have yielded a shoot.

in the Nyakweri indigenous forest in Kenya. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rangers from the Mara Elephant

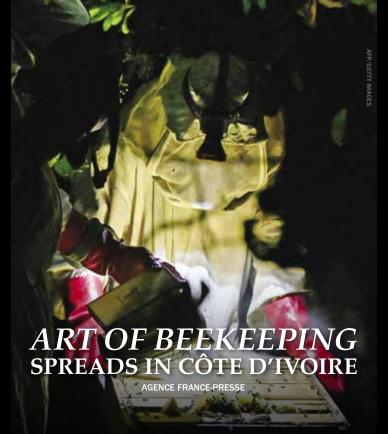
disperse seedballs

Project help

"Telling people to wait three years, or whatever, that's a very hard thing," Kinyanjui said.



A gardener points out a tree seedling sprouting from a seedball planted in a nursery in Kenya's Masai Mara ecosystem. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Night has just fallen in central Côte d'Ivoire, and the hour has come for two men, venturing forth in protective suits, veils and gloves, to collect honey from their bees.

The art of beekeeping has spread swiftly in Assounvoue, in the heart of the world's top cocoa-producing country.

Farmers started taking up honey-making to supplement their income. They soon realized that their primary crops did better when pollinated by the bees. Word of the twin benefits spread fast.

"In West Africa, you have to harvest the honey at night," said beekeeper Sebastien Gavini, co-director of Le Bon Miel de Côte d'Ivoire, which translates to "the fine honey of Côte d'Ivoire."

"These bees are savage and aggressive; they don't let you go. By working at night, you don't get pursued by the bees, which means we don't put people at risk."

Modern beekeeping is only getting started in Africa, said Francois Silue, a member of the Ivoirian Cooperative Co. (SCI) at Katiola in the north, the source of the country's most highly regarded honey.

"Our duty is to stop farmers from killing the bees, to change their culture," said Silue, who was trained by Japanese and German specialist aid workers.

The SCI brings together about 50 beekeeping farmers. The platform estimates that 30 metric tons of honey are produced each year by about 100 members and several cooperatives.

Most of these people have kept their traditional roles as farmers, treating the production of honey as a secondary activity. "Money is earned from the honey, and harvests are better because of better pollination," said Mathieu Offi, who works alongside Gavini.

Gavini said beekeeping requires a small investment. "All in all, a hive costs 35,000 CFA francs (\$65). Add the clothing and some basic equipment, and it's 65,000 CFA (\$120) at the most. You get the money back in the first year."

The price of a kilogram of honey ranges from 3,000 to 10,000 francs (\$5.55 to \$18.50), while spinoff products such as beeswax, propolis varnish, essential oils and even bee venom also sell well.

"The taste of the honey depends on what the bee has been foraging," said Edvige Brou Adoua, a saleswoman at the Katiola cooperative. "Honey from here is renowned because there are acacias and cashew nuts. It's sweet."

DEEP-FREEZE CASE COULD HELP TRANSPORT VACCINES IN AFRICA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

South African company wants to help solve the logistical challenge of keeping COVID-19 vaccinations at the extremely low temperatures necessary as they are shipped across the continent.

Johannesburg-based natural gas producer Renergen is developing an ultra-cold biologic transport freezer for the task as African countries continue to roll out comprehensive vaccination programs.

Vaccines developed jointly by United States pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech must be stored at minus 70 degrees Celsius, a far cry from what much of rural Africa can support.

Some nations have capitalized on vast storage and distribution infrastructure to amass stockpiles of shots from those companies.

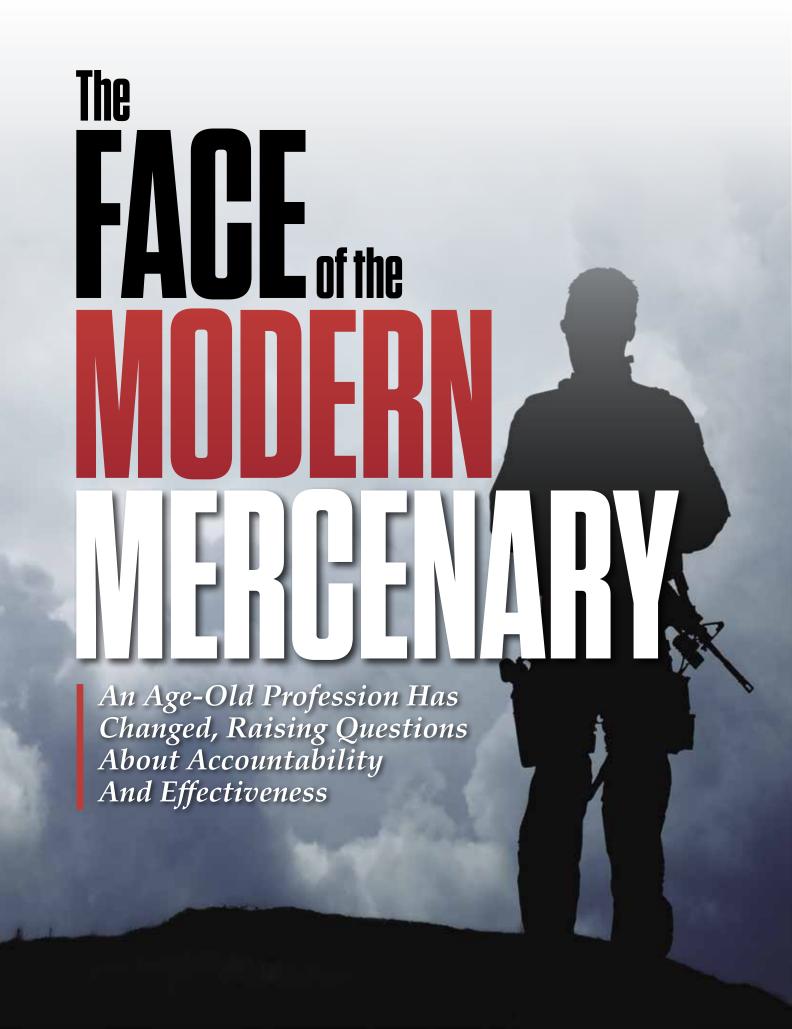
Renergen's design will use helium to transport vials by air and nitrogen by road, keeping them as cold as minus 150 degrees Celsius, its CEO Stefano Marani said in February 2021.

The storage case, called Cryo-Vacc, can operate without a power supply for more than 25 days, he said. Vaccines often are transported in Africa in dry ice that usually lasts only about three days. Marani said their biggest container can hold between 5,000 and 6,000 vials.



The aluminum cases also are equipped with tracking devices and monitors to evenly distribute the cold.

"This has been designed to be robust and rugged," he said. "It has been designed for the field. You can kick it, you can drop it, you can leave it in the sun — it doesn't care; it's going to operate until it runs out of cryogen," which keeps it cold.



ADF STAFF

n Frederick Forsyth's 1974 novel, "The Dogs of War," a band of mercenaries slips into a small, fictional African nation at the direction of a Western tycoon bent on deposing the nation's dictator to exploit valuable platinum.

The novel, and the 1980 movie based upon it, tells a violent tale that paints a stereotypical picture of mercenaries: cynical, amoral, highly trained, heavily armed, single-minded and beholden to those who pay them.

In Forsyth's story, the small band of hired guns are veterans of other clandestine battles, operating through shadowy deals, selling their services to questionable benefactors.

The modern mercenary is more likely to operate under a corporate banner, sometimes with government ties, striking deals with legitimate administrations to crush insurgencies and end civil wars.

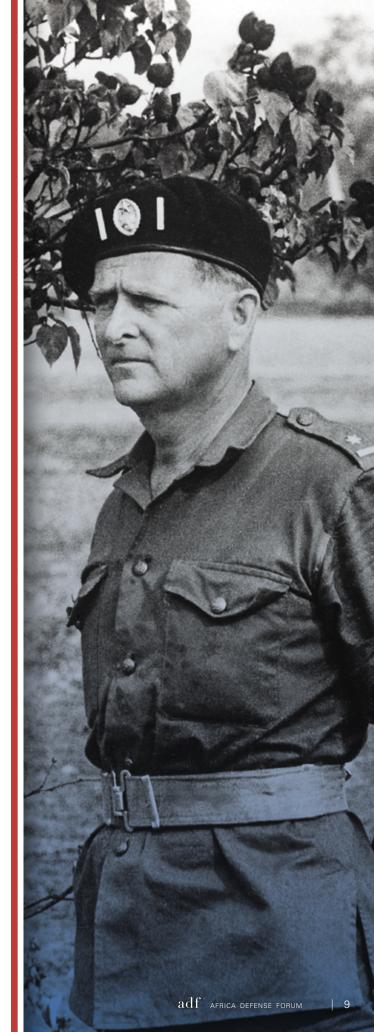
Mercenaries are about as old as war itself. Persia's King Xerxes I is said to have employed Greek fighters in 484 B.C. Soldiers for hire have populated many of history's well-known wars, from the Balearic Islands shepherds who fought for Carthage during the Punic Wars against Rome, to the German auxiliary soldiers known as Hessians who fought for the British in the American Revolution.

Mercenaries also have deep roots in African warfare. Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II is said to have used more than 10,000 mercenaries in the 13th century B.C. Such fighters also were hallmarks of colonial and Cold War eras.

Maj. Michael "Mad Mike" Hoare, a British Army veteran of World War II, once was considered the world's best-known mercenary. He fought at the behest of Congolese Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe against the communist-backed Simba rebellion in 1964, according to a February 2020 BBC obituary. His men became known as "The Wild Geese," and a fictional movie was based on their exploits.

In 1981, Hoare's career ended in embarrassment when he and 46 of his recruits tried to overthrow the socialist government of President France Albert René in the Seychelles. An airport blunder by one man revealed

British Army Maj. Michael Hoare, shown in 1964, was known as "Mad Mike" and was among the best-known mercenaries to fight in Africa. His exploits included fighting in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo and leading a failed coup in the Seychelles. He died in February 2020 at age 100. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



PMCs coming in from outside raise difficult questions about foreign motives and exploitation of African nations and their valuable resources.

a disassembled AK-47. In an attempt to escape, the mercenaries commandeered an Air India plane back to South Africa, the BBC reported. A year later, Hoare and his men were tried in the hijacking. Hoare spent 33 months in prison.

Starting in 1961, well-known French mercenary Bob Denard led uprisings in Angola, the former Belgian Congo, Benin, Zimbabwe (then called Rhodesia) and several times in the Comoros, according to The New York Times. It was in that tiny island nation in October 1995 that French forces stormed the country to reverse his third coup there, marching the limping, gray-haired man out of the barracks outside the capital, Moroni. He died in 2007.

Some more modern incarnations of the "soldier of fortune" are likely to be employed by what are called private military companies (PMCs). These businesses, sometimes formed by veterans of national militaries, can provide anything from logistics and training to lethal force on the battlefield.

They have been a steady presence in Africa for at least a generation, selling their services in high-profile conflicts all over the continent. Their use fuels ongoing debates about accountability. PMCs coming in from outside raise difficult questions about foreign motives and exploitation of African nations and their valuable resources.

TYPES OF 'MERCENARY' GROUPS

Mercenary is a term often applied to anyone working in a military or security context outside of a state military or police institution. But there are distinctions that should be noted when looking at those hired to perform functions traditionally reserved for the military.

Here are some useful definitions:

• Mercenaries: This term typically applies to individuals who sell their services to fighting forces or causes as freelancers. They take part directly in hostilities, do so for private gain and for sums typically exceeding those paid to combatants in the armed forces, according to international humanitarian law. They are not nationals or residents of territories controlled by parties in the conflict and are not sent by nonparty nations as members of their armed forces.

The 1989 International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries forbids the recruitment and use of mercenaries. Thirty-seven nations are parties to the treaty, including 10 African nations: Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, the Seychelles and Togo. Five



- others Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco, Nigeria and the Republic of the Congo have signed, but not ratified, the treaty.
- Auxiliaries: These fighters are organized differently than regular military forces and might consist of troops from foreign or allied nations that serve another nation at war. An example of this would be the Hessians used by the British in the American Revolution.

Also, auxiliaries can include local fighters recruited to serve with colonial troops. For example, French colonial forces used Muslim fighters known as Harkis during the Algerian War of Independence from 1954 to 1962.

• **Private Military Companies:** This is the more modern version of what commonly are called mercenaries. PMCs, sometimes called private military security companies, are legal entities, unlike true mercenaries. However, their use is controversial and often raises questions about accountability and actual or potential abuses. Various countries take differing positions on the use of PMCs.

A PMC is a private business that typically has several characteristics. First, it sells its services to national governments, international groups and other actors. Those services can include guarding convoys, buildings and personnel; maintaining and operating weapons; overseeing detainees; and advising and training local security forces,





according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Sometimes, these groups engage in "direct, tactical military assistance" to include combat on the front lines of a conflict, according to American scholar and political scientist Peter W. Singer. Sometimes, services include intelligence, logistics and maintenance.

These private groups have been used in conflicts all over the world in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Syria and the former Yugoslavia. Such groups recently have been active in Africa in the Central African Republic, Libya and Mozambique, to name a few.

The use of PMCs is complicated from a legal standpoint. Put simply, if PMC employees are not used as combatants, then they are by definition civilians and entitled to all associated protections.

PROMINENT PMCs IN AFRICA

Several PMCs have been involved in high-profile African conflicts over the past 30 or so years. Some of the more prominent ones are profiled below.

Perhaps the most well-known African PMC — and one of the first — was **Executive Outcomes (EO)**, founded in 1989 by Eeben Barlow, a former officer in the South African Defence Force. Barlow's connections and experience — he was a lieutenant colonel — afforded him access to personnel with a range of military and tactical experience.

That, coupled with equipment that included cargo and troop carriers, light aircraft and surveillance equipment, allowed EO to operate with efficiency and effectiveness



One of 70 foreigners arrested in Zimbabwe in a mercenary plot to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea talks to his lawyer in March 2003. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

in two African conflicts: civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone, wrote South African journalist Khareen Pech. She reported her findings in the 1999 book "Peace, Profit or Plunder? The Privatisation of Security in War-Torn African Societies," published by the Institute for Security Studies.

In Angola, EO used Mi-24 helicopter gunships, converted Mi-17 troop-carriers and L-39 trainer jet fighters, Pech wrote. It also operated several light aircraft and two Boeing 727s out of airports in Johannesburg and Malta. Through troop training and other support, EO is credited with helping to turn the tide in favor of government forces during that conflict.

In Sierra Leone, EO was hired in the mid-1990s to help government forces in their fight against Revolutionary United Front rebels. Government forces eventually defeated rebels, secured a peace treaty and held elections.

EO, which frequently has been the subject of controversy, shut down in the late 1990s, but Barlow announced in a December 2020 post to his Facebook page that the company had been reactivated.

Another PMC active on the continent is South Africa-based **Dyck Advisory Group** (**DAG**), which was formed by Lionel Dyck, a former colonel in the Zimbabwean military.

DAG offers a range of services, according to its website, which include counterpoaching, explosive hazard management and canine services. Its most recent and high-profile engagement on the continent was its involvement in the growing violent insurgency in northern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. DAG was called in to help Mozambican authorities put down the Islamic State-backed insurgency in 2020, but its one-year contract reportedly was scheduled to end in early April 2021.

DAG had some success during its presence in Mozambique. It came in after extremists had routed the forces of the Russian PMC Wagner Group. However, in a March 2021 report, Amnesty International accused the organization — and other parties to the conflict — of indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

The report accused Dyck Advisory Group staff of opening fire indiscriminately on civilians while pursuing insurgent fighters.

DAG founder Lionel Dyck told Reuters: "We take these allegations very seriously and we are going to put an independent legal team in there shortly to do a board of inquiry and look at what we are doing."

Russia's **Wagner Group** is perhaps the most active and notorious PMC operating on the continent now. It has been active in the Central African Republic, Libya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Sudan. It pulled out of Mozambique after Islamic State-aligned extremists there imposed heavy losses on its personnel.

Wagner Group is a prime example of a private organization being used as a national proxy to secure influence in a foreign nation without having to submit to the scrutiny usually brought on by the use of more official government and military channels.

Wagner is linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman and close associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The oligarch is said to run the company. In fact, experts say that Russia uses PMCs such as Wagner as a way to advance national foreign policy objectives in other nations without the direct involvement of the Russian government.



Mercenaries from among 10 Malians and two Nigerians captured by Libyan anti-government rebels in February 2011 show their passports. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

BALANCING BENEFITS AND THREATS

The use of PMCs and mercenaries was discussed in February 2019 during the United Nations Security Council debate on "Mercenary activities as a source of insecurity and destabilization in Africa." Equatorial Guinean President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo presided, and members discussed the potential destabilizing aspects of such forces balanced against the supervised use of PMCs to train militaries and offer much-needed logistical support.

Mercenary forces were cited as a threat to African nations, especially in regions with rich natural resources. President Obiang said his nation became a mercenary target after oil was discovered in the 1990s, adding that there had been five attempts to invade Equatorial Guinea using mercenaries. "These mercenaries attempted to assassinate me and my family in December 2017," he told the Security Council.

Participants spoke of updating legislation on mercenaries, using a legal framework similar to those used to counter piracy and terrorism, and of securing borders. Still others said nations must distinguish between destabilizing mercenary groups and more professional and legitimate groups that provide valuable services.

PMCs are likely to continue as a source of debate in Africa for years to come. □

RUSSIA'S SHADOW SOLDIERS

The Wagner Group Gives
Russian President Vladimir Putin
Foreign Influence With Deniability

ADF STAFF

n Russia's frenzied attempt to flex its muscles, get access to natural resources and increase its geopolitical relevance, it relies heavily on private military companies (PMCs). This strategy produces a small foreign footprint and offers the Kremlin plausible deniability while enriching a small circle of people.

President Vladimir Putin's Russia favors the use of PMCs such as the Wagner Group when forging training and security deals with African nations while positioning itself to access mines and other rich resource repositories.

"They act as force multipliers, arms merchants, trainers of local military and security personnel, and political consultants," according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace article, "Implausible Deniability: Russia's Private Military Companies," by senior fellow Paul Stronski. "Nominally private actors, they extend the Kremlin's geopolitical reach and advance its interests. Versatile, cheap, and deniable, they are the perfect instrument for a declining superpower eager to assert itself without taking too many risks."

The Wagner Group, the most prominent of Russia's PMCs, emerged from conflict in the Ukraine in 2014, starting with about 250 men and growing to 10 times as many, according to September 2020 paper by researcher Sergey Sukhankin. They were sent to Syria, where they supported President Bashir al-Assad's forces and have since made their way into Africa.

"Aside from in Ukraine, Syria and Libya, the Wagner Group has appeared in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa as a 'shadow facet' of the military-technical cooperation between Russia and local states," Sukhankin wrote in "Russian Private Military Contractors in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strengths, Limitations and Implications" for the Institut français des relations internationales.

Despite denials and obfuscation from official Russian government sources, observers generally agree that the Wagner Group is a proxy arm of the government with connections to the national security apparatus, Putin's rich cronies and the president himself. However, successfully documenting these connections can be challenging.

Even so, Wagner forces have been known to operate in a number of African nations, including the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Sudan. Their presence often coincides with the business interests of one of Putin's closest allies, the oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin.



Yevgeny Prigozhin, left, serves dinner to then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in 2011. Prigozhin is known by the nickname, "Putin's chef." REUTERS

PUTIN'S CHEF

Despite his close association with Putin, Prigozhin did not start the Wagner Group. That credit falls to Dmitry Utkin, a veteran of the Chechen wars and a former member of the Russian intelligence service known as the GRU.

Utkin worked for the Moran Security Group in Syria, quitting in 2014 to found Wagner, so named for his former call sign, "Vagner." It was a nod to the German composer Richard Wagner, whose works Hitler appropriated for the Third Reich.

Although not a company founder, Prigozhin's influence is said to be key in how the group's forces are employed. Prigozhin's personal history is an extraordinary one: A Soviet court convicted him of robbery and other offenses, and he served nine years in prison. Once released, he hawked hot dogs from a kiosk and eventually opened a restaurant on a docked boat. After serving a meal to Putin there, Prigozhin found favor with the Russian leader and soon was catering Kremlin affairs, becoming known as "Putin's chef."

As Russia transitioned out of its Soviet past and into newfound capitalist ventures in the 1990s, Prigozhin opened St. Petersburg's first grocery store chain, and soon luxury restaurants, according to a report from Turkish news service TRT World.



Businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin, right, shows his school lunch factory to then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin outside Saint Petersburg in 2010. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Prigozhin eventually was drawn into Putin's inner circle, where he found lucrative high-dollar military and school catering contracts. Soon, he had turned his business toward construction and a range of other interests. Often his interests and those of the Kremlin found common ground in places as far-ranging as Syria, Libya and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Simply put, the company's presence in geopolitical hotspots illuminates coordination between Prigozhin's commercial ambitions and the Kremlin's pursuit of its national interests," Aruuke Uran Kyzy of TRT World Research Centre wrote.

EXTENDING PUTIN'S REACH

What could a small, private security company possibly do to advance Russian geopolitical aims in Africa and elsewhere?

Perhaps the most valuable asset the Wagner Group offers Putin is plausible deniability. Russia's Constitution reserves all defense and security functions for the government, so establishing PMCs is illegal. However, loopholes allow registering companies abroad and state-run enterprises to have private security forces. In Wagner's case, there's no evidence that it is registered anywhere.

Putin's deployment of Wagner outside Russia gives him and his government influence in other nations without the publicity and liability that comes with national military interventions.

For example: If Wagner is deployed in a conflict in an African country and suffers embarrassing losses, as happened while fighting Islamist militants in northern Mozambique, the Russian government does not have to endure the public fallout associated with losing national military troops during an ill-fated adventure on foreign soil.

Russian personnel arrived in Mozambique as the two countries forged agreements that will give Russian businesses access to liquefied natural gas, which is plentiful in the nation's north.

Also plentiful in the north are violent insurgent attacks by a relatively new terrorist group, Ansar al-Sunna, which has aligned itself with the Islamic State. Well-equipped Wagner forces brought in to help an overmatched military

RUSSIA IN AFRICA

Russian Military Presence in Africa Military cooperation agreement with Russia Proposed logistics base Russian mercenaries Percent of country's arms imports supplied by Russia (2009-2018) 0-9% 10-29% 30-49% 50-69% 70-100%

Russian Energy and Mining Activity in Africa



Gas exploration/extraction



Oil exploration/extraction



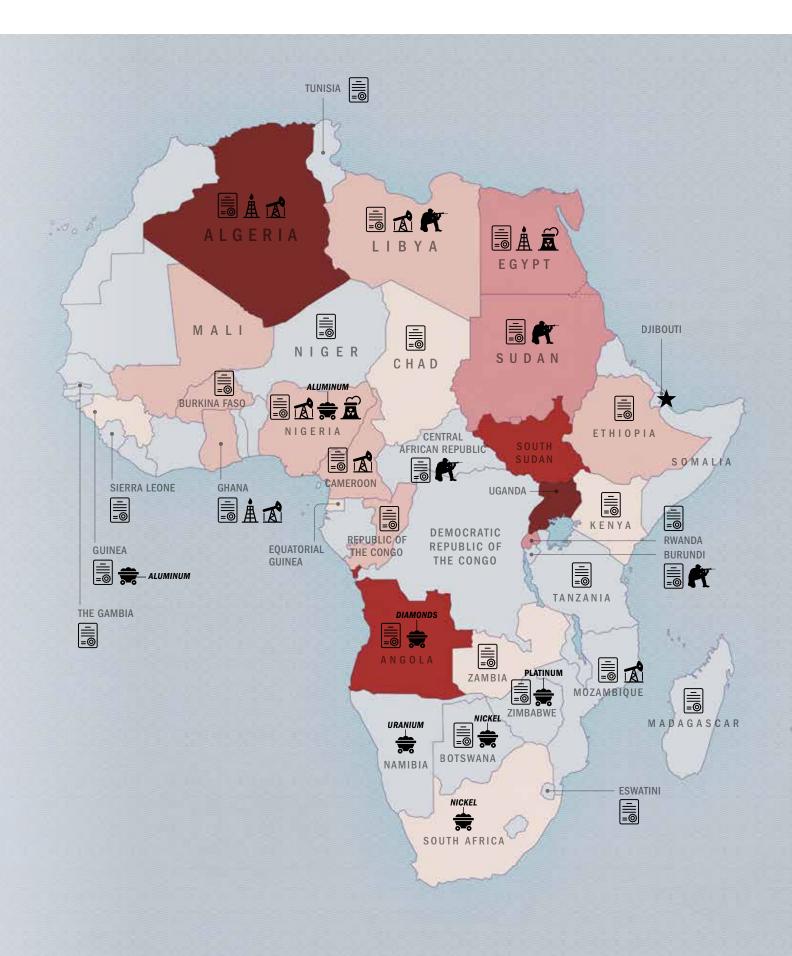
Minin



Agreement to construct a nuclear power station

"As Russia increases its involvement in Africa, Wagner operations have expanded across the continent, where it protects Prigozhin's investments."

— Alexander Rabin, Foreign Policy Research Institute



soon took significant and embarrassing losses due to their ignorance of the local terrain and their inability to effectively communicate with government forces. They soon departed.

Although the Mozambique engagement went poorly, Wagner personnel tend to be battle-hardened fighters as opposed to retirees or veterans. This provides a ready-made fighting force that allows the Russian government to pursue its foreign policy aims without leaving fingerprints.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Wagner's presence often ends up aligning with Prigozhin's business interests. His Evro Polis energy company entered into a contract with Syria's state-owned General Petroleum Corp. The Associated Press reported in December 2017 that the contract guaranteed Evro Polis 25% of proceeds from oil and gas production at fields its contractors take and protect from the Islamic State.

"Similarly, as Russia increases its involvement in Africa, Wagner operations have expanded across the continent, where it protects Prigozhin's investments," wrote Alexander Rabin for the Foreign Policy Research Institute in 2019.

In 2017 and 2018, Prigozhin's personal plane was found to have headed to African countries numerous times. Trips included Angola, the CAR, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Sudan and Zimbabwe,

according to Sergey Sukhankin's January 2020 Jamestown Foundation report, "The 'Hybrid' Role of Russian Mercenaries, PMCs and Irregulars in Moscow's Scramble for Africa."

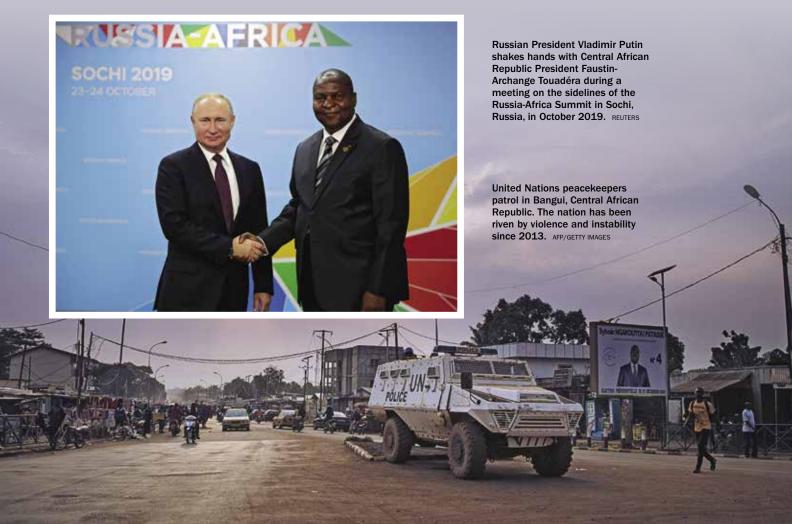
The report notes that all of these countries hold three things in common:

- Each is known for social and political instability.
- All are "handsomely endowed with strategically important natural resources."
- Each used to be part of the influence spheres of colonial powers such as Belgium, France and Portugal
 — nations that Russia no longer considers capable of fending off its involvement in the countries.

Corruption and insider deals soon follow lines similar to those in Syria, according to Sukhankin: Moscow secretly strikes a bilateral deal with the nation's leaders and offers military and security support in exchange for natural resource concessions.

"Under this scheme, a portion of the profits allegedly go to the Russian state budget (via the companies/corporations involved), while the rest is distributed among private individuals who, in fact, may be closely associated with the government," Sukhankin wrote.

After rumors in late 2017 that Russian mercenaries had been sent to the CAR and Sudan, two companies connected to Prigozhin — Lobaye Invest and M-Invest — won licenses to extract gold, diamonds, uranium and more, Sukhankin wrote. Reports also indicate that Wagner



personnel provide a security detail for CAR President Faustin-Archange Touadéra and guard gold mines.

In 2018, three Russian journalists were murdered while investigating the entry of Wagner Group forces into the CAR from neighboring Sudan, where Wagner had been training local security forces. By 2019, talk had turned to the potential for a Russian base in the CAR.

On the surface, the CAR would seem to be an unlikely target for Russian presence and influence. However, the nation's longstanding instability — and its rich deposits of diamonds, gold, uranium and oil — make it a desirable center of influence for Russia. Putin deftly exploited the situation there by employing a Cold War Soviet-era model that relies on "military-technical cooperation," according to an analysis by the Jamestown Foundation. The CAR and Russia signed an agreement in August 2018, and Russia since has expanded its footprint in the country using two methods.

First, a military training/consulting agreement began in March 2018 with the arrival of advisors consisting of five military personnel and 170 "civilian instructors," according to the foundation. Despite statements to the contrary, these instructors are in fact Wagner forces.

Second, Russia has given CAR's government military and technical equipment that includes weapons, ammunition and military vehicles. Most of this assistance is rendered cheaply, as much of the equipment is dated. Also, Russia's goals tilt more toward economic benefits than ideology, according to Jamestown.

Despite this alleged assistance, there is evidence that Russia may be using Wagner to play both sides in the CAR.

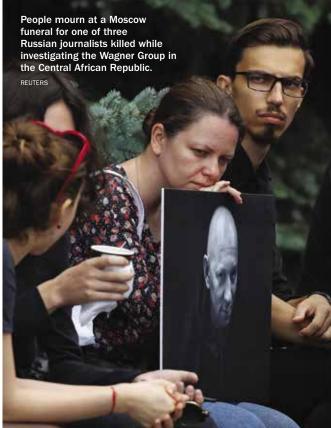
For example, Geopolitical Monitor noted in August 2020 that more than 80% of the country remained under rebel control. "Wagner, along with providing military training, allegedly collaborates with these rebels to exploit the local population," Daniel Sixto wrote. "Wagner forces reportedly coordinated with rebel forces to allow a Russian mining company to access diamond mines in insurgent territory, undermining their wider objective in the region."

In Libya, Russia has used Wagner to intervene in the conflict on the side of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar against the United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord, which preceded the interim government under Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, known as the Government of National Unity. Libya also is rich in oil deposits, and its Mediterranean coast makes it a highly strategic potential sphere of influence.

U.S. Africa Command has accused Wagner forces of planting mines and other explosive devices in Libya, sometimes hiding them in toys, according to Business Insider.

Wagner and Prigozhin also extend influence into the online realm. Reports indicate that Wagner has been behind online influence campaigns in Libya that target citizens and bolster Haftar and Saif al-Islam Gadhafi, the late dictator's son. Similarly, the group is known to have tried to influence the 2018 elections in Madagascar.

Wagner isn't just an advantage for Putin, Prigozhin or the Russian government. Those working abroad for

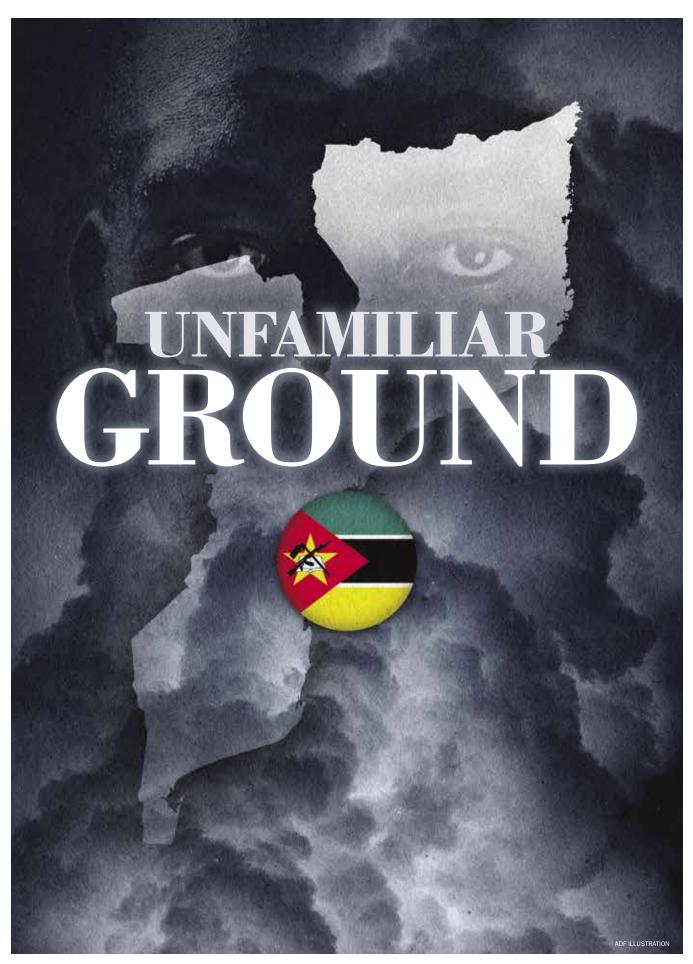




Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army, has support from Russia's Wagner Group in his fight against the U.N.-backed government in Libya. REUTERS

Wagner also benefit, most notably financially. According to TRT World, Wagner troops can earn 1 million rubles over three months — the equivalent of up to \$16,000. That can be up to 10 times what they would make as a Russian soldier. Wagner commanders can earn up to three times more. If killed in action, the fighter's surviving family can get about \$56,000.

"Wagner is deployed by Russia as an extension of its foreign and military ambitions, and authoritarian regimes just so happen to be the clients," Ahmed Hassan, CEO of intelligence consultancy Grey Dynamics, told Business Insider. "Of course, those type of regimes often try to solve civil unrest by force, and Wagner is such a tool."



Can Hired Guns Turn the Tide in Mozambique's Intractable Cabo Delgado Province?

BY CYRIL ZENDA

ruthless and shadowy insurgent group has taken root in northern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. The Islamic State-aligned militants, known as Ansar al-Sunna — "supporters of the tradition" — emerged in October 2017 and have

fomented violence that had killed more than 2,500 and displaced more than 700,000 as of mid-March 2021.

Cabo Delgado, located on Mozambique's northern border with Tanzania, is home to about 2.3 million people, 60% of whom are Muslims. Locals know it as "Cabo Esquecido," or "Forgotten Cape."

Since 2019, the Mozambican government has employed private military companies (PMCs) to help battle the insurgents, with mixed success. The groups are controversial and highlight the financial and human rights ramifications of outsourcing national security to private interests.

Furthermore, analysts say Mozambique's reliance on high-cost PMCs in the province's natural gas-rich northeast might be unsustainable in the long term.

"The stakes are extremely high," said Lionel Dyck, head of the Dyck Advisory Group, a South African PMC that has helped the government put down the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. "But the Mozambique Defence Forces are unprepared and under-resourced, and we have to move fast," he told the Africa Unauthorised website in July 2020.

Since the end of 2017, the national military has been trying to crush the armed group that has destabilized the region where ExxonMobil, Total and other international energy companies came in to capitalize on \$60 billion in natural gas deposits.

ROOTS OF THE INSURGENCY

Just as the gas companies were laying groundwork, Ansar al-Sunna started its destructive insurgency. Locals call the group "al-Shabaab," but it has no ties to the Somalia-based al-Qaida affiliate. Although there is no consensus on the motives for the insurgency, analysts agree that religion might have provided a rallying point for those already dissatisfied with the widespread socioeconomic and political inequalities that have existed since Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975. These conditions have attracted mostly young people to radical movements such as Ansar al-Sunna, which promises that its form of Islam will act as a remedy to corruption and rule by elites.



This vehicle was left wrecked on the roadside after militants ambushed a civilian convoy in Mozambique in March 2021. DYCK ADVISORY GROUP/REUTERS

"We occupy [the towns] to show that the government of the day is unfair," a militant said in a 2020 video, according to the BBC. "It humiliates the poor and gives the profit to the bosses."

Dr. Eric Morier-Genoud, a Mozambican-born political scientist at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, links the insurgency to specific historical and social dynamics.



Lorenzo Macagno, who has researched Islam in Mozambique's Nampula province, argued that insurgent violence in the adjacent Cabo Delgado province could be an expression of jihadist tensions that have marked Islam in Mozambique for decades.

"I found Islam in the province of Nampula to be hospitable and peaceful, but I know that it has also been marked by internal tensions and that now they are experiencing a jihadist extrapolation in Cabo Delgado," said Macagno, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Paraná, Brazil.

For Macagno, poverty, state repression and the presence of foreign capital in natural gas projects are not enough to explain the armed uprising in Cabo Delgado. Those factors are present in other parts of Africa and the world, where there are no jihadist ventures.

The armed groups "present themselves as messianic and with an agenda for the salvation of an Islam which combats Muslims deemed apostates, who collaborate with the secular state," he said.

A MILITARY SOLUTION

President Filipe Nyusi's government in Maputo labeled the armed rebellion as acts of banditry and deployed military forces in the hopes of quickly quashing the militants. But that response proved woefully inadequate.

Researchers from Observatório do Meio Rural (Rural Observatory) (OMR), a Mozambican nongovernmental

organization, are not surprised that the military deployment failed. They say some members of the Armed Forces, who also suffer from government neglect, share grievances with the militants.

They say that at the start of the rebellion, ordinary citizens feared government forces more than they feared the insurgents.

"In fact the military on the ground complain of being underpaid and of problems of logistical supply," OMR researchers said.

The military deployments also have angered communities. Some locals "complain of theft and extortion of money by the military," the researchers said. "News reports and WhatsApp videos indicate the general feeling that the military is not adequately protecting populations by avoiding confrontation with insurgents."

Mozambican Soldiers and police officers are among the lowest-paid government workers. This, combined with a critical lack of resources, has severely affected morale and created conditions ideal for corruption.

A RESORT TO MERCENARIES

In mid-2019, when it became evident that Mozambique's Defence Forces, known as Forças de Defesa e Segurança, had no capacity to deal with the insurgency, Nyusi turned to PMCs for help.

About 200 mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a PMC reportedly controlled by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman with close Kremlin links, landed secretly in Cabo Delgado in September 2019. The fact that Wagner secured the lucrative contract over a number of African-based PMCs with solid experience operating in the region highlights the opacity of such contracts.

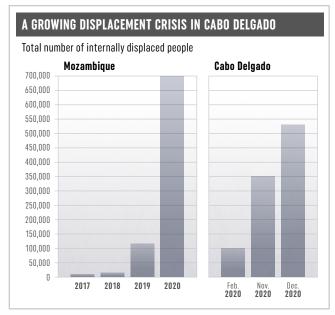
Wagner's lack of regional experience was costly. By November 2019, Wagner had hastily retreated from Cabo Delgado after suffering heavy losses, including some beheadings.

Emboldened by their victories against the betterequipped Russian forces, the insurgents launched more daring attacks in 2020.

This pushed the government in April 2020 to hire Dyck Advisory Group. Immediately there were reports of success, including the killing of 129 insurgents.

"Some of the atrocities committed are unlike anything I have seen before, and I've seen a lot of wars, in a lot of different places," Dyck, a former colonel in the Zimbabwean military, told Africa Unauthorised in July 2020 when he detailed reports of mutilation of bodies and cannibalism. "Despite this barbarism, this enemy is organised, motivated and well equipped. If we don't get on top of this, it's going to spread south fast and that will be a catastrophe for the entire region."

Temporary shelters in Cabo Delgado's Metuge district provide a home for people fleeing militant violence. ${\tt AFP/GETTY\ IMAGES}$



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

A Dyck company official said in a March 31, 2021, report that Mozambique was not extending the company's contract. The announcement came after an Amnesty International report accused all parties in the conflict of committing human rights violations.

Mozambique also is said to have hired Paramount Group, a South Africa-based global aerospace and technology company. Although Paramount Group doesn't supply personnel, it does provide armored vehicles,





Insurgents burned this home in the village of Aldeia da Paz outside Macomia, Mozambique. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and naval vessels, and training for pilots, K9 officers and vehicle operators.

THE COST OF PMCS

The cost of the hired guns might never be known, but analysts say PMCs always are expensive.

"There is no doubt that the use of PMCs is highly controversial in a country such as Mozambique; a lack of transparency means that it is hard to assess quite how lucrative these contracts may be, but it is clear that private contractors are expensive, with some PMCs earning up to four times the U.S. military salary," security expert Ben Simonson wrote for Global Risk Insights.

Revelations by other PMCs that missed out on the Mozambican contract when it was given to Wagner Group showed that at that time, they were charging monthly bills of up to \$25,000 for each contractor on the ground, in addition to equipment and other logistical considerations.

If these sums are accurate, monthly payments to a PMC easily can surpass the salary bill of Mozambique's entire 11,200-person Army, whose Soldiers are paid an average of \$70 per month.

The huge private costs have raised questions of how Mozambique can sustain the expense in the long term, considering the drawn-out nature of jihadist insurgencies such as those waged by Boko Haram in West Africa and al-Shabaab in Somalia.

Calton Cadeado, a lecturer at Joaquim Chissano University in Maputo and a defense and security expert, blamed past policies for the current state of affairs.

"The Armed Forces, for political, economic and geopolitical reasons, were weakened," Cadeado said. "Politically, various voices, especially from the donors' side, employed cynical arguments grounded on liberal theory to impose poor investment in the Armed Forces."

Now it is clear, he said, that not investing in the military was a mistake. "Today, modernizing the Armed Forces is undoubtedly a must."

Simonson agreed that PMCs are coming in to plug a huge security gap that Mozambican forces have no capacity to fill.

"There is no doubt that the operational deficiencies within Mozambique's security forces have meant the inevitable: heavy reliance on private contractors. Above all, something is always preferable to nothing, and in this case, the use of PMCs has prevented a very severe situation from getting any worse," Simonson said. "The unfortunate truth is that war is big business, and where there is conflict, there are private military contractors who seek to reap the profits."

"The solution cannot be just military, because it's almost impossible to win [against] a guerrilla movement in a scenario of poverty, inequality and with historical deep tensions."

- OBSERVATÓRIO DO MEIO RURAL RESEARCHERS

NONMILITARY SOLUTIONS

While Nyusi and his government pursue military solutions to the insurgency, analysts say the use of nonmilitary means to end the conflict always should be considered.

"They need to constructively engage with issues of land ownership, begin to address sectarian tensions and avoid vexing Muslims in their security operations if they want to prevent the Islamist guerrillas from tapping into local grievances and gaining more ground," Morier-Genoud said.

Cadeado said it was important for the government to address issues that fuel dissatisfaction among local populations. The government should invest in development at the local level and pay close attention to the youth bulge in areas affected by the insurgency, he added.

Mozambique's post-independence civil war fought from 1977 to 1992 between the ruling Marxist-Leninist Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, known as FRELIMO, and insurgent forces of the Mozambican National Resistance, known as RENAMO, only ended through negotiations. This raises serious misgivings about the possibility of ending the current conflict through purely military means.

"The solution cannot be just military, because it's almost impossible to win [against] a guerrilla movement in a scenario of poverty, inequality and with historical deep tensions," OMR researchers warned. They added that private security forces don't understand local dynamics or the forested terrain, which is complicated in an area where insurgents have some local support.

OUTSIDE HELP STARTS TO ARRIVE

The Mozambican government's longtime hostility toward foreigners has not helped win outside assistance. It has been accused of cracking down on journalists, aid workers and opinion makers, some of whom have helped shed light on atrocities that have taken place in the conflict zone.

However, as the insurgency persisted, nations in the region and beyond began to consider various forms of assistance. As 2020 ended, Tanzania offered to conduct joint military operations along their common border, and Portugal offered to train members of the Mozambican Army.

In the spring of 2021, a dozen U.S. Army Green Berets began a two-month program to train Mozambican Marines in basic soldiering skills that could lead to more help, such as planning, logistics and combat casualty care, The New York Times reported. The U.S. also will consider providing intelligence help.

The South African National Defence Force in April 2021 sent in troops to provide logistical support for South African citizens wanting to return home, according to South Africa's Eyewitness News.

In early May 2021, the European Union announced it would consider a military training mission in Mozambique, Reuters reported.



Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi speaks with the press. REUTERS

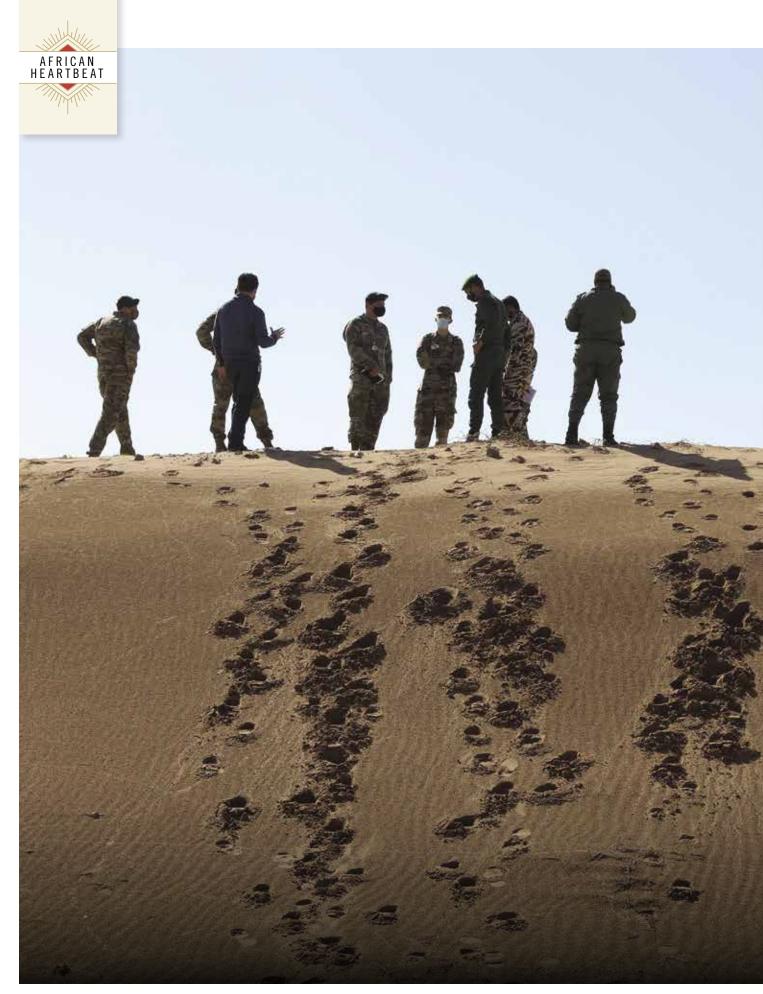
After months of deliberations, the 16-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) agreed on June 23, 2021, to deploy its regional standby force to help combat terrorism in Mozambique. Officials did not provide troop numbers, deployment schedules or personnel roles.

"This is just the first step to a wider solution," Liesl Louw-Vaudran, senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, told Reuters. "This is the first time that ... the SADC standby force has mobilized in

a counterterrorism operation which is not peacekeeping. It's a situation that's very complex."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cyril Zenda is a journalist based in Harare, Zimbabwe. His work has appeared in Fair Planet, TRT World Magazine, The New Internationalist, Toward Freedom and SciDev.Net.

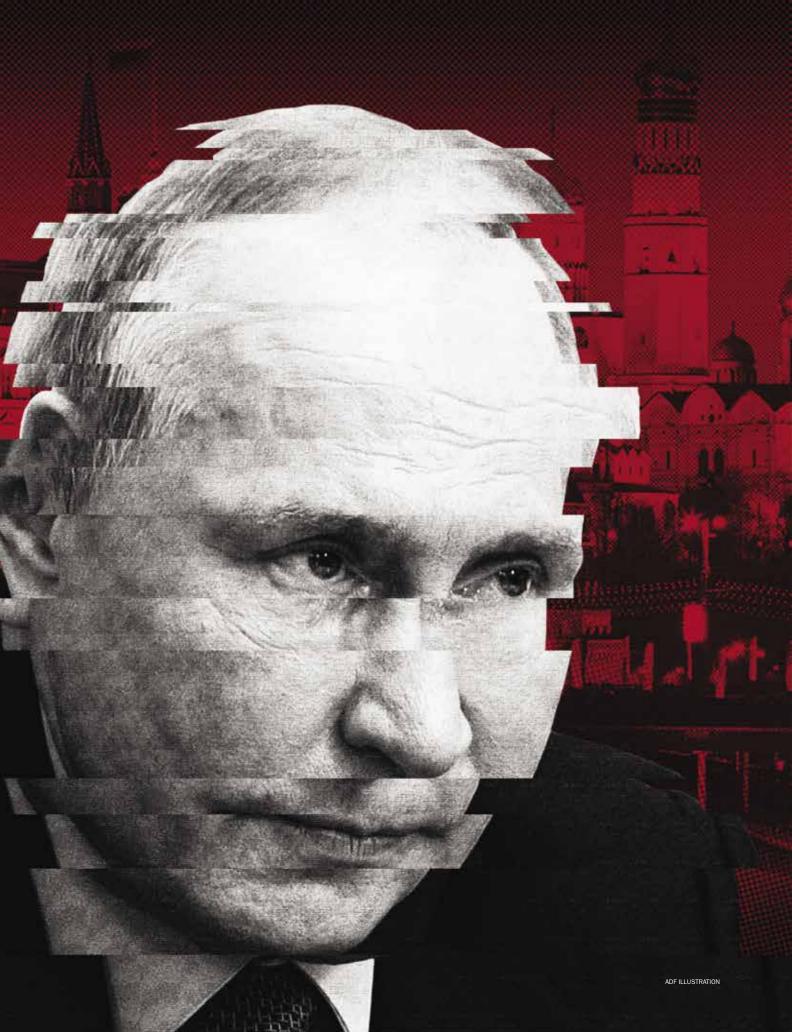




SCALING — the HILL TOWARD SECURITY TOGETHER

ADF STAFF -

nited States and Moroccan forces met to plan for the June 2021 African Lion exercise, which brought together more than 7,000 troops from Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, the U.S. and elsewhere. Planners considered this hill in Agadir, Morocco, for small-weapons training. Hundreds of other planners worked virtually to set goals and COVID-19 protocols. Established in 2002, African Lion is U.S. Africa Command's largest exercise and helps build cooperation, strengthen relationships, and increase readiness to counter security challenges in North Africa and Southern Europe.



WARPED

MESSAGES

Russian Disinformation Aims to Influence Elections and Gain Access to Natural Resources

ADF STAFF

n Madagascar, a webpage in the Malagasy language shows a cartoon of a Russian bear awakening from hibernation to save Africa from hyenas.

In Libya, an Arabic language website hails Saif al-Islam, son of the late dictator Moammar Gadhafi, as the country's savior.

In the Central African Republic, a site in French celebrates the visit of Miss Russia to the country to judge a beauty pageant.

All of these websites share a characteristic: Russian operatives created them as part of a wide-ranging influence campaign in Africa. In a study by the Stanford Internet Observatory, analysts reviewed 73 Facebook pages that they termed "inauthentic" and suspected of being linked to Russia. The pages had posted 48,000 times, had more than 9.7 million interactions and were liked by more than 1.7 million accounts. These pages are believed to be just a fraction of the Russian internet effort in Africa.

"The disinformation operations are one of the many new methods ... that help Russia extend their sphere of influence," wrote Róbert Gönczi for the Warsaw Institute. "The message is clearer than ever: Russia has returned to the African continent and their intentions are more serious than ever."

Observers say Russia does not have the political clout or economic resources to exert influence on a wide scale the way it did during the Cold War. Instead, it views online messaging as a way to make a splash on the cheap.

"Social media and online influence is a relatively low-cost way to have the impact on the world stage," said Cameron Hudson, a senior fellow of the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council. "Anything that they can do to undermine the free press, democratic institutions and to sow doubt in the minds of populations, I think, probably plays into their broader vision."

TIED TO PUTIN

The man leading the effort is Yevgeny Prigozhin. A close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, he heads Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Russian "troll" operation, and the Wagner Group, a private military contractor active in Africa.

Early in its research, Stanford identified a cluster of Facebook pages linked to Wagner that targeted Libya. The pages supported rogue Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and his fighters. They also waxed nostalgic about the Gadhafi era and sought to discredit the United Nations and the West. When researchers reported the pages to Facebook, the social media company identified similar pages targeting the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Sudan. The pages have since been removed.

RUSSIAN MISINFORMATION EFFORTS IN AFRICA BY COUNTRY

IIRYA

Types of web content: Sites designed to resemble news and fan pages of political and military leaders.

Messaging: Support for Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and his militia; and Saif al-Islam, son of former Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Possible goal: Support return to authoritarian rule of Libya, which could ease Russian access to natural resources, including oil.

SUDAN

Types of web content: Sites designed to resemble news, political pages.

Messaging: Support for former leader Omar al-Bashir, denigration of protest movements, touting Russia as an economic partner.

Possible goals: Bolster a friendly regime that gives Russia mineral access. Win support for a Russian naval base on the Red Sea.

MADAGASCAR

Types of web content: Sites designed to resemble news, sites supporting politicians, a site created for a mining company.

Messaging: Russia actively supported its preferred candidates during the 2018 national elections with web ads, television ads and print materials in violation of campaign laws.

Possible goal: A company controlled by Yevgeny Prigozhin bought a majority stake in a Malagasy chromium mining company and needed a friendly government to maintain access.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Types of web content: Sites designed to resemble news, sports and culture pages, pages supporting politicians, general-issue pages supporting Russia's involvement in the CAR.

Messaging: Pages generally were supportive of the administration in power, supportive of Russia-CAR partnerships, and critical of France and the United Nations.

Possible goals: Russia is a major arms supplier to the country and has built a significant political and security partnership through private military contractors. These contractors offer personal protection to politicians and train the armed forces. Reportedly, this partnership has established Russian companies' access to CAR mineral extraction. The cyber effort might seek to broaden this access and win public support.

Sources: Stanford Internet Observatory, The New York Times, CNN

In many parts of the world, Russia seeks to influence elections in favor of candidates it believes will be pro-Kremlin.

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with then-Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi in Tripoli in 2008. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Russia's efforts appear to rely on subcontractors who are native speakers of a language in the target area and often are from the targeted country. Aside from Twitter and Facebook, the groups also operate on the messaging apps WhatsApp and Telegram.

Shelby Grossman of Stanford said the pages in Africa began to spring up in 2018, not long after Facebook and Twitter had disabled most of the IRA's accounts in the U.S. Grossman believes Prigozhin was working on a "franchising" strategy through which local actors could be paid to post on behalf of Russia. Such posters are harder to connect to Russia and can produce content that resonates with the local community in fluent local dialects, she said. Stanford received leaked internal documents identifying many of these pages as linked to Russia. Without them, Grossman said, it would have been difficult even for trained analysts to identify them as inauthentic.



"It's really hard to recognize these campaigns as they're unfolding in real time," Grossman told the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. "And if disinformation researchers can't identify something without an internal document, it's not reasonable to expect ordinary people to figure it out."

Although the pages vary greatly in approach and style, several major themes emerge.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

In many parts of the world, Russia seeks to influence elections in favor of candidates it believes will be pro-Kremlin. In Madagascar, for example, Russia supported a presidential candidate in the 2018 election with a digital and in-person effort that violated the nation's campaign laws. The effort included webpages and traditional campaign material such as pamphlets, billboards and television advertisements. Russian operatives linked to the Wagner Group also paid local journalists to write positive stories about the candidate and paid people

to attend campaign rallies, The New York Times reported.

Russian election meddling also has been documented in Libya and Mozambique where, months before the 2019 election, Russian operatives created pages supporting the incumbent president.

"The Facebook and Instagram content we analyzed was typically supportive of the ruling party in whatever country the page or account was targeting," Grossman said. "Generally, the content consisted of a lot of 'cheerleading' for whomever was currently in office."

The Russian strategy appears to support incumbent regimes, often led by authoritarians, who can show their gratitude by directing resources and lucrative contracts toward Russian companies.

"These are countries with authoritarian-style leaders who need a little extra help to win," said Paul Stronski, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "And in return, [Prigozhin] gets access to some of the goodies."



A Malagasy electoral official displays a ballot during the 2018 election vote tabulation. REUTERS

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, left, and then-Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe meet before the commissioning of a platinum mining project in 2014. Russia has used online disinformation campaigns to support governments that grant it access to mineral resources. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

OPENING THE DOOR FOR BUSINESS

Russia's disinformation campaigns often are designed to give its businesses an advantage.

In Sudan, Russian-backed webpages described the economic struggles the country is experiencing, including food shortages and inflation. They touted the economic advantages of a proposed Russian naval base on the Red Sea and Russia's expertise in the mining sector.

Before the downfall of longtime President Omar al-Bashir, a Prigozhin-controlled business called M-Invest helped spread misinformation and sought to undermine popular protests against Bashir. In return, Bashir gave gold mining rights to a subsidiary of M-Invest known as Meroe Gold.

"M-Invest is believed to have advised Omar al-Bashir on how to create a whole system of false propaganda to discredit the leaders of the popular pro-democracy protests," said Suliman Baldo, senior advisor at The Sentry, an investigative group researching money connected with war criminals. "Then also, they advised him to stage public executions and kill a reasonable number of protesters so as to quell the protest against his regime."

This type of outside support and information campaign is sometimes called a "black knight" operation. Russia plays the role of the black knight supporting the leader or party in power and, in return, gets access to natural resources.

Russian energy giant Rosneft operates in Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan and Uganda. Russian nuclear power company Rosatom has signed agreements to work in 14 African countries, and energy companies Lukoil and Gazprom also are active on the continent. Russian mining companies are eager to gain access to rights for bauxite, platinum and other metals.

The Russian government sees a strategic advantage in supporting regimes that can give companies access to these natural resources. Often these are regimes that most world leaders do not want to be associated with.

RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN AFRICA BY COUNTRY

| Initiative | Key African Target Countries |
|--------------------------|---|
| Natural resources | Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe |
| Arms sales | Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe |
| Security cooperation | Angola, Central Africa Republic, Egypt, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Somaliland, South Africa, Sudan |
| Counterterrorism | Chad, Nigeria, Somalia |
| Nuclear power technology | Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia |
| Hydropower construction | Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, Zambia |
| Railway construction | Angola, Guinea, Nigeria |
| | Source: Africa Center for Strategic Studies |

Source: Africa Center for Strategic Studies

"Russia is willing to do business with a lot of unsavory actors," Hudson said. "It is willing to do business with regimes that are seeking to hold onto power through unconstitutional methods. It is willing to do business with military governments, governments that Western democracies might not be so quick to embrace. Russia sees itself as having an advantage in going after those markets."

TROLL FARMS

Not all of Russia's African cyber activities are directed at African countries themselves. Some use Africa as a platform to broadcast outward.

To create a layer of confusion and distance themselves from global efforts at election interference and disinformation, Russian operatives have set up "troll farms" in Africa. Operations discovered in Ghana and Nigeria pay young people to post false or misleading stories on social media platforms, according to a CNN investigation.

Facebook removed 49 accounts, 69 pages and 85 Instagram accounts it believed were engaging in foreign interference. Twitter also removed 71

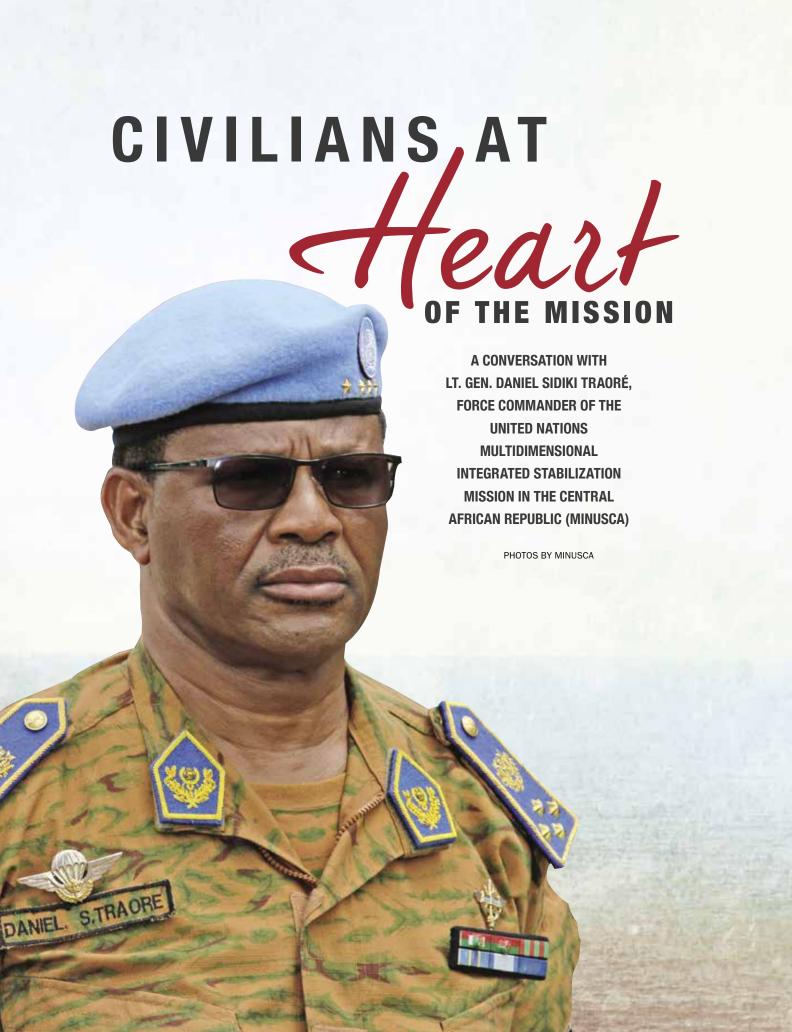
accounts linked to the farms where people often live and work in cramped quarters.

"Most were tweeting in English and presented themselves as based in the United States," Twitter said in a statement. "The accounts — operating out of Ghana and Nigeria and which we can reliably associate with Russia — attempted to sow discord by engaging in conversations about social issues, like race and civil rights."

This franchising of Russia's disinformation efforts makes it harder to trace and to shut down.

Grossman said that although social media giants and governments can do more to stop this type of meddling, the best and quickest solution is for users to educate themselves on what might be inauthentic content or social media posts designed to manipulate them.

"In general, when citizens are consuming information on social media, they should think about how that content is trying to make them feel," Grossman said. "And if it feels like your emotions are being manipulated, then it's a good idea to be suspicious."





Lt. Gen. Daniel Sidiki Traoré was appointed force commander of MINUSCA in January 2020 after serving as deputy force commander for two years. A native of Burkina Faso, he joined the country's National Armed Forces in 1977 and served in roles including commander of the 6th Military Region, commander of the 2nd Military Region, head of the Operations Department in the general headquarters, head of the Intelligence Department, head of the Human Resources Department and special advisor to the chief of defense staff. He has served in United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Sudan and Mali. He spoke to ADF by phone from mission headquarters in the Central African Republic (CAR). This interview has been edited to fit this format.

clashes between

armed groups in

visited the town-

ship of Bégoua in

Bangui to listen to

civilians and try to reassure them

about security.

January 2021, Lt. Gen. Traoré

security forces and

ADF: On a personal level, why have you dedicated so much of your career to peacekeeping?

Traoré: I think peace is the most important thing we have in life. Without peace, life would be useless. Particularly on the African continent, where we have a lot of issues with security, I think those who have the capacity to provide input and make a contribution should not shy away from doing it. That is why for more than 20 years I have given part of my military career and my life to the peacekeeping process. And I believe, in this capacity when we want to bring peace, we can make it. And if we achieve peace in Africa, we can achieve it all over the world.

ADF: It has been six years since the creation of MINUSCA after the 2013 crisis in the CAR. There still are large areas of the country not under government control. How do you approach a peacekeeping mission when there still are rebel groups active and launching attacks?

Traoré: The signing of the peace agreement between the government of the CAR and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019 brought some hope to the peace process. Since then, there has been progress with respect to the restoration of state authority. Security and defense forces have deployed to areas where they were absent for years. MINUSCA supported the deployment of the CAR military to Bangassou, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro, Ndélé and Birao.

However, some armed groups haven't stopped committing violations. Considering this context, MINUSCA has an approach informed by dialogue, good offices and a robust posture.

This approach includes:

- Deployment of MINUSCA peacekeepers in the mission area of responsibility, especially to the hot spots and areas controlled by the armed groups. We do this with a strong mind and a robust posture to ensure protection of civilians (POC) and freedom of movement on the main supply roads and to provide a secure corridor for humanitarian assistance delivery.
- Robust patrols to show MINUSCA is present where there is a need.
- Engaging all stakeholders in constructive dialogue

- rather than adopting a confrontational approach.
- Follow up on the implementation of existing peace agreements by signatories and encouraging other stakeholders to join the peace process.
- Finally, we engage and combat the armed groups that are harming civilians and violating the peace agreement. For instance, during the events of December 2020 and January 2021, MINUSCA was on the front lines of stopping a coordinated attack by some armed groups that formed a coalition under the leadership of former CAR President François Bozizé.

ADF: MINUSCA helped provide security for national elections. The election was successfully completed, but rebel attacks forced some polling places to shut down. Can you describe the successes and challenges of the MINUSCA election security effort?

Traoré: This is very important, and it was very challenging. In close coordination with the CAR government and National Defence and Security Forces, an integrated security plan was designed and approved for the 27 December 2020 general elections. The implementation of this plan started with a military operation called A la Londo against a group known as the 3R in June 2020 in the West to create a safe and secure environment allowing voters to register and candidates to campaign freely. Because before the elections, these armed groups had started to threaten the population.



Ahead of the elections, MINUSCA established, with all electoral stakeholders, a crisis management cell that met weekly and whenever needed. That cell permitted us to identify all the organizational tasks, the challenges posed by shortfalls and made it possible to build good coordination.

These elections presented a double challenge:

- The first was the security challenge due to the number of voting centers and armed group threats. MINUSCA had to provide security before, during and after the elections since the armed groups intended to disrupt the process.
- The second was a logistical challenge due to difficult road conditions and polling stations being located in remote areas. There was a need for timely delivery, storage, collection, and security of the electoral material and ballot boxes. MINUSCA provided escorts, equipment and support, especially military air assets, to deliver all the electoral material. After the election, in the same way, we gathered and returned all the ballot boxes to Bangui.

The plan was implemented, and December's elections were held although the armed group coalition disrupted and impeded the elections in some areas in the West. The CAR voters elected their president and members of the parliament.

ADF: In March, the U.N. Security Council approved an additional 2,750 military personnel and 940 police officers for the

mission. What will these additional personnel allow you to do in terms of mission effectiveness? How will they be deployed?

Traoré: We went through really tense and difficult times dating back to December 2020. Now it's a little bit better, but it remains tense. The U.N. Security Council's decision was right on the point and is aimed to enhance MINUSCA's ability to perform its priority mandated tasks, in particular protection of civilians and facilitation of humanitarian access, as well as to prevent and reverse further deterioration in the security situation.

The additional troops will permit the force to be more proactive and responsive. It will decrease the time required for intervention through regional rapidly deployable reserve forces. During the crisis in December 2020, we had to deploy all our reserve forces, and this overstretched our units to cope with the threats.

These additional troops will allow us to:

- Improve security on the Main Supply Road, MSR1, which leads from the Cameroon border to Bangui and is the country's lifeline. This is where all the supplies and food coming into this country are transported. It's very important to keep it safe.
- Assign quick-reaction forces to all sector commanders, which will improve their ability to protect civilians and support humanitarian assistance. This will allow them to respond quickly to areas where they have threats.
- Address in a timely manner any threat or attacks by the armed groups or other spoilers.



The deployment of the reinforcement units will be done in successive phases that have been prioritized by the U.N. headquarters and the mission.

ADF: Protection of civilians is a key component of the MINUSCA mandate. What is your strategic approach toward protecting civilians? How have you tried to improve this during your time leading the mission?

Traoré: The protection of civilians is at the heart of our mandate. It is an overall and integrated approach of all mission components and the uniformed components, the force particularly.

The first thing I do is to identify and map all POC threats. Based on this mapping I decide how to deploy MINUSCA forces in order to address, contain and deter these threats. By coordinating with other mission components through early warning mechanisms and community engagement, we can reduce the violence. Over the past months I have deployed troops in remote areas and also increased the number of long-range and robust patrols. The layout of our force is dynamic and is adapted to the evolution of the security situation on the ground. This allows us to prevent and respond swiftly to the threats against the population.

The force has a strategic POC approach that consists of:

• Communicating with the armed groups and the

- Armed Forces of the CAR (FACA) so they understand the stakes of violating the POC principles.
- Requiring all sectors and units to maintain a POC early warning tracking table, which is updated daily.
- Deploying units, quick-reaction forces, on standby mode to intervene swiftly in case of POC concerns.
- Having good coordination with the humanitarian assistance providers for the readiness of assistance delivery.
- Keeping air assets ready and on standby to intervene whenever necessary.
- Finally, all over the country, we conduct regular, robust patrols within our area of responsibility, especially in the main hot spots we have mapped.

ADF: How do you believe MINUSCA forces are viewed by civilians? How have you sought to build bridges of trust with civilians?

Traoré: Perception from civilians is evolving. It varies according to the security situation. For example, MINUSCA forces and police had a robust posture against armed groups during the attacks on Bangui on 13 January 2021, and really dating back to December 2020 when the attacks started. This was followed by very positive media reports and positive perception from communities.

However, in the following weeks, the perception



changed with the dissemination of fake news accusing MINUSCA of not having taken part in the offensive operations. And, as you know, in this country rumors are very present.

To keep a favorable opinion among the population, we communicate and we regularly interact with them directly or through our civilian components. Indeed, each battalion conducts exchange, support or aid activities in its area of operation. This may be a soccer match between a local team and a MINUSCA team, it might be the renovation of a classroom, the distribution of school supplies, or the reconstruction of deteriorated bridges and roads. We also offer free medical consultation with free treatment and basic life skills training sessions in various vocations for the locals and many other activities.

ADF: What projects have had the biggest impact?

Traoré: We are doing a lot in this area, to build up the confidence between us and the population through what we call quick-impact projects and the civil-military cooperation activities all over the country. For example, MINUSCA built or repaired bridges in Bangassou and Bocaranga in 2020, and Bakouma in 2021 and delivered them to local authorities. In response to the water and electricity shortages in Bangui, since mid-April 2020 we have been providing assistance to the national electricity

> and water companies to address this crisis. The city of Bangui was really in darkness, and MINUSCA forces provided some equipment to overcome the shortages of electricity and water.

ADF: It has been well-publicized that there are foreign security actors, mainly Russians, operating in the CAR. How does this complicate your mission?

Traoré: On this point I would like to be clear, precise and concise. The FACA are our only partners. Nevertheless, other foreign security actors are operating under the purview of bilateral agreements with the national government. They represent an additional actor on the ground, and we as MINUSCA must consider their presence to avoid intermingling and exchange of fire during

Peacekeepers from MINUSCA's Pakistani engineering company repair the PK24 bridge on the Bangassou-Bakouma road in the

operations. Another difficulty is that our FACA counterparts are also supported by the same foreign security actors.

ADF: MINUSCA has been criticized by observers, including the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for coordinating with Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group. Can you respond to this criticism? What are you doing to correct this?

Traoré: We don't have a relationship with bilateral forces. MINUSCA has never conducted joint military operations with foreign security forces operating in the CAR. Similarly, MINUSCA has not interacted with such forces. The MINUSCA force operates under Security Council Resolution 2552 and the United Nations peacekeeping operations and fully implements the principles therein.

ADF: What needs to happen in the near future for the FACA and the CAR government to be ready to take over security responsibilities in the country?

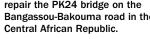
Traoré: The FACA forces have been conducting offensive operations on the ground that have allowed them to redeploy in various places, contributing to restoring state authority. The next step will be to consolidate those gains, in coordination with efforts that are being made at the national level through dialogue with stakeholders to build a sustainable and lasting peace.

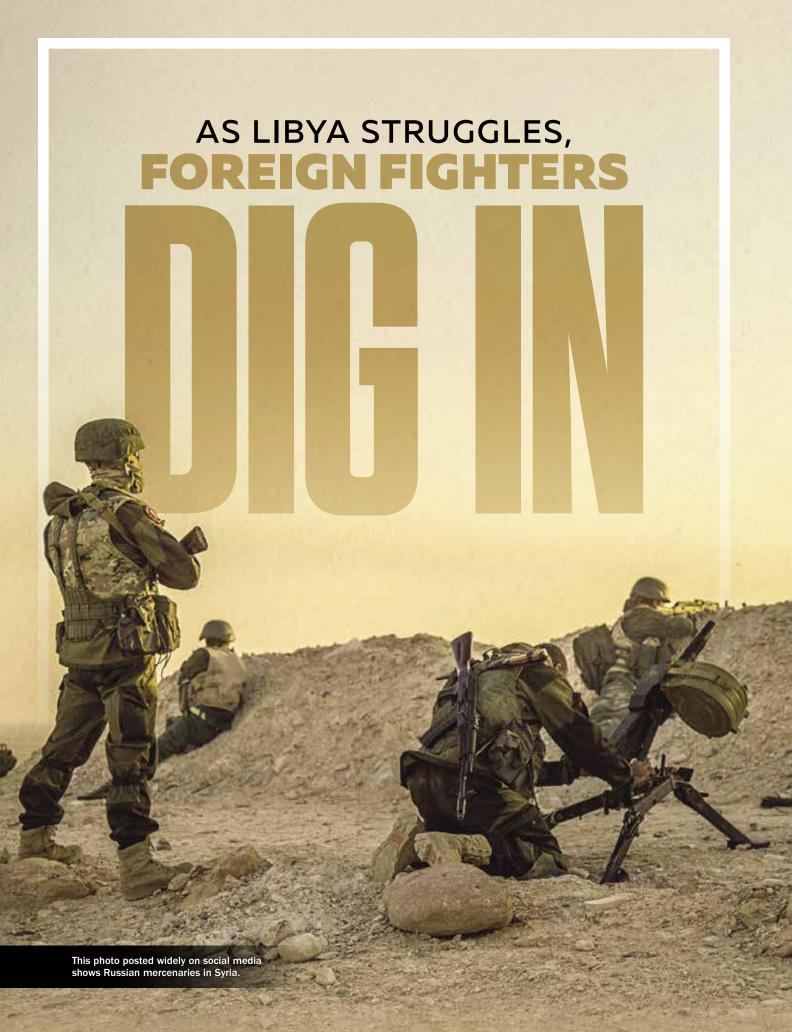
The FACA have made some progress over the last years, but challenges remain and have to be addressed by the institution and the CAR government. For example, we have to:

- Complete the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the security sector reform process.
- Provide standard training to the internal security forces, gendarmerie and FACA troops in their respective missions to show professionalism and good discipline spirit.
- Provide the basic equipment and uniform to the forces.
- Finally, the security defense forces must be deployed all over the country in the different zones, which will allow other stakeholders of the state to deploy.

ADF: How optimistic are you that this can be accomplished and that things are moving in the right direction?

Traoré: Having been in this country for almost four years, I think there has been progress. There are definitely still challenges, but from what we are doing so far, with the commitment of all the stakeholders, I think we are on the right path. We have made some progress; now we need to reinforce this and to remain strong to overcome these challenges. I think over time we can build a lasting and sustainable peace for this country. \Box





FOREIGN FIGHTERS ARE RELUCTANT TO LEAVE. VAST OIL AND GAS RESOURCES ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM.

ADF STAFF ·

In late 2019, as a fierce battle raged in Libya to save the southern suburbs of Tripoli, medics treating the wounded began to notice something unusual. They were finding bullet holes but no exit wounds.

Instead, what they found in the wounded were hollow-point bullets as long as a finger. Few of the people who were shot survived. The ammunition was a deadly calling card of Russian mercenary snipers who had entered the fight on the side of militias commanded by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar.

Their motive was profit and, according to Soldiers fighting on behalf of Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA), they did not abide by laws of war or care much for human life.

"They care about money, collecting money," Haitham Werfali, an artillery commander for the GNA Army, told the BBC. "They kill people, cause terror and commit crimes for money."

The abuses soon worsened. According to a GNA Soldier interviewed by the BBC, Russian mercenaries would execute Libyan Soldiers once they were captured. "He put his hands up, and they shot him in the stomach, two bullets next to each other," said Mohammed al-Kahasi recalling the death of one of four Soldiers he believes was executed.

A former Russian mercenary who fought in Libya confirmed the brutal tactic, saying prisoners of war were kept only as long as they were useful. "If a workforce is needed to dig trenches, for example, or do labor, then a prisoner has value as a slave," the former Wagner mercenary told the BBC. "If that's not required, the result is obvious. No one wants an extra mouth to feed."

The alleged war crimes committed by Russian mercenaries jeopardize a fragile peace in Libya. As leaders of Libya's unity government tried to rebuild in 2021, they asked foreign fighters to go home.

"We demand that all mercenaries leave the Libyan lands immediately," interim Minister of Foreign Affairs Najla al-Mangoush announced March 17, 2021.



Alleged Wagner Group mercenaries pose for a photo during deployment. SECURITY SERVICE OF UKRAINE

But in subsequent months, Russian forces continued to play a spoiler role in the country. Satellite imagery showed the construction of a trench that extended 70 kilometers south from the coastal city of Sirte toward a Haftar-controlled air base in al-Jufra. Experts who analyzed the images spotted 30 defensive positions dug along the trench.

"Wagner's forces will not abide by any agreement to withdraw from Libya," Muhammad Ammari, a member of Libya's Presidential Council, told The Libya Observer. "The Wagner Group provides the Russian government with the power and means to influence Libyan political, military and economic policy."

A DESTABILIZING FORCE

Libya largely has been without a government since 2011, when rebels overthrew and killed dictator Moammar Gadhafi. Various factions controlled parts of the country until late 2020, when a cease-fire ended the fighting.





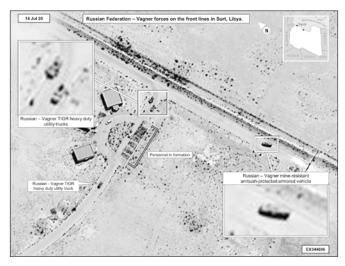
Leaders established the Government of National Unity with Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah as its head. Elections were planned for December 24, 2021.

As most of the government's institutions fell into place, Dbeibah said that the country's armed forces remained divided. Fixing that divide is in the hands of a joint military commission made up of five senior officers from Dbeibah's former United Nations-recognized GNA and five senior officers from its rival, the former Libyan National Army (LNA) of eastern-based military commander Haftar.

U.N. investigators said Haftar was backed by at least 1,200 mercenaries representing Russian private military companies such as the Wagner Group. Haftar also had help from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which provided air power.

At that time, a U.N. report repeatedly warned the Security Council that "a massive influx of weaponry, equipment and mercenaries" was a violation of a U.N. arms embargo.

Haftar formed his breakaway army and started the war in April 2019 with weapons that were believed to have come from the UAE and Russia. The report did not speculate as to how much Wagner Group fighters were being paid. But it noted that the Russians have "provided advanced equipment, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, and advanced capabilities, such as trained snipers, to the conflict, resulting in significant casualties to forces aligned with the GNA."



Imagery proves Russia's involvement in Libya by showing Wagner Group utility trucks and Russian mine-resistant ambush-protected armored vehicles. U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

The Wagner Group also has been active in the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda and Sudan.

'BURROWING IN'

Haftar's offensive wound down in 2020 when Turkey formally got involved, after approval by the Turkish parliament earlier in the year.

AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS NO FIGHTING, AND NEW PROSPECTS FOR PEACE HAVE TAKEN HOLD, RUSSIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE INSERTED THEMSELVES INTO LIBYA'S STRUGGLE 'ARE BURROWING IN.'

"One of the things Turkey did by officially intervening in Libya is upgrade the weaponry," Oded Berkowitz of Max Security told The Independent. "It's like they fast-forwarded Libya a new generation."

Ulf Laessing, Reuters news Egypt and Sudan bureau chief, warned that the foreign fighters were taking Libya's future out of Libyans' hands.

"On the ground, the Libyan players have limited skills — they know how to run Kalashnikovs and old tanks," he said in a press briefing.

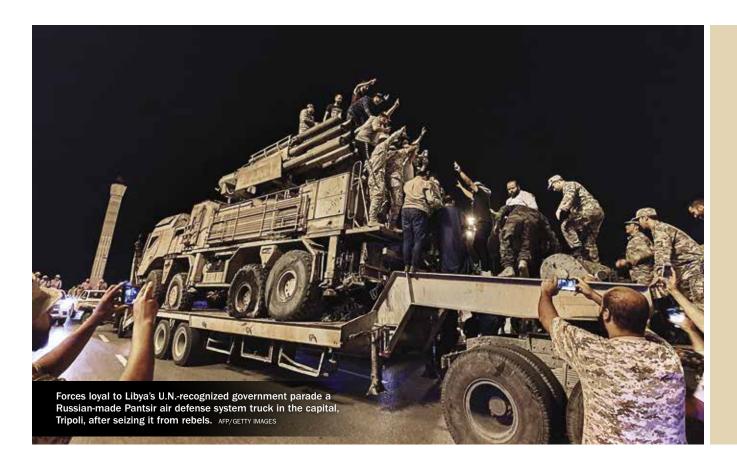
The Russians supplied the LNA with 14 fighter jets and fighter-bombers. The Independent reported that as early as 2017, the UAE had sent drones, planes, attack helicopters and armored vehicles to Libya in support of the LNA.

Russian fighters have conspicuously ignored the cease-fire and the plea that all mercenaries go home. The Washington Post reported that clandestine Russian flights into Libya continued long after the fighting stopped.

"This is what is so terrifying for the Libyans," a senior Western diplomat told the newspaper. He said that at a time when there is no fighting, and new prospects for peace have taken hold, Russia and other countries that have inserted themselves into Libya's struggle "are burrowing in."

As GNA and Turkish forces pushed Haftar and Wagner forces out of the capital in 2020, the departing fighters left another deadly calling card. Residents returning to the southern Tripoli neighborhoods of Ain Zara and Salahuddin discovered land mines in or near their homes. The Russian-made antipersonnel mines discovered in these neighborhoods are banned under international treaties. Additionally, deminers discovered "booby trap" explosives designed to detonate when a person trips them or merely walks nearby. These deadly devices, which use electronic timers, circuit boards and modified cellphones, are banned, according to Human Rights Watch.





Perhaps most disturbing is that deminers discovered booby-trapped toys such as teddy bears and soda cans, which often are picked up by children.

"Of all the conflicts in Libya since 2011, this one by far was the worst for us," Moad Elarabi, the operations manager for the Free Fields Foundation, told the Post. "From this conflict, we found a lot of new weapons, all brought from outside."

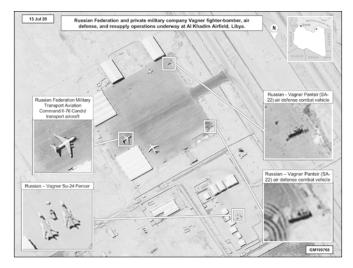
As of July 2020, 52 people had died and 96 were injured by land mines and booby traps left in Libyan neighborhoods, the U.N. reported.

MOTIVATED BY MONEY

Experts say the Russians aren't in Libya in support of any particular ideology, nor are they interested in leaving the country stable and peaceful. They are in the ravaged country for the spoils of war: Libya's vast oil and gas riches. They also are jockeying for access to military bases and are pushing to shape, to their own advantage, the future government. Libya also is prized for its strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea.

An ex-Wagner fighter confirmed this to the BBC, saying of the mercenary group: "It is a structure aimed at promoting the interests of the state beyond our country's borders."

Jelena Aparac, chair of the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, said the presence of these mercenaries imperils Libya's future, including the national election in December 2021.



This image details the extent of equipment being supplied to the Wagner Group. Russian military cargo aircraft, including IL-76s, continue to supply Wagner fighters. Russian air defense equipment, including SA-22 missile systems, are in Libya and operated by Russia, the Wagner Group or their proxies. U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

"Libyans should be able to undertake [the voting] process in a safe and secure environment, and the presence of these actors impedes that," Aparac wrote in a July 2021 report.

Prime Minister Dbeibah told parliament that the peace process depends on foreign fighters pulling out.

"The mercenaries are a stab in our back — they must leave," he said, as reported by Agence France-Presse. "Our sovereignty is violated by their presence." □





Mercenaries A Fixture In War-Torn CAR

Foreign Fighters Capitalize On Chaos for Self-Enrichment

ADF STAFF

ussian mercenaries have been linked to human rights abuses and have tried to profit off the chaos in the Central African Republic (CAR), one of the poorest countries in the world despite vast natural resources.

In March 2021, United Nations-appointed independent-rights experts alleged that the CAR's recruitment and use of "private military and foreign security contractors" from Russia and Sudan were raising the risks of widespread human rights abuses.

At the same time, the country's president was using Russian mercenaries as his personal bodyguards. Russian mercenaries had contacts with some of the 15,000 peacekeepers involved with the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The rights experts, the U.N. reported, said that such private military personnel have been linked to reports of "mass summary executions, arbitrary detentions, torture during interrogations, forced disappearances, forced displacement of the civilian population, indiscriminate targeting of civilian facilities, violations of the right to health, and increasing attacks on humanitarian actors."

One former government official told The New York Times in 2019 that Russian mercenaries flew private planes near a CAR site where they were training local Soldiers. They loaded the planes with diamonds, the newspaper reported. "Russian contractors were also digging up diamonds near the border with Sudan, according to the local officials and warlords."

A HISTORY OF REBELLION

The country has seldom been stable since its independence in 1960, but it has been in a constant state of strife since rebels took control of the capital in March 2013. Rebel fighting in the country has forced nearly a fourth of its 4.5 million people to flee their homes. Rival militia groups control most of the nation.

Voters elected Faustin-Archange Touadéra, a former prime minister, as president in 2016. Touadéra was reelected at the end of 2020 in a vote in which some CAR citizens were unable to participate due to the violence. About 14% of the nation's 800 polling stations were closed.

In the weeks leading up to the 2020 elections, U.N. experts charged with monitoring an arms embargo in the CAR cited an "influx of foreign fighters" into the country. The U.N. said that a series of clashes was fueled "by arrivals of foreign fighters and weaponry, mainly from Sudan."

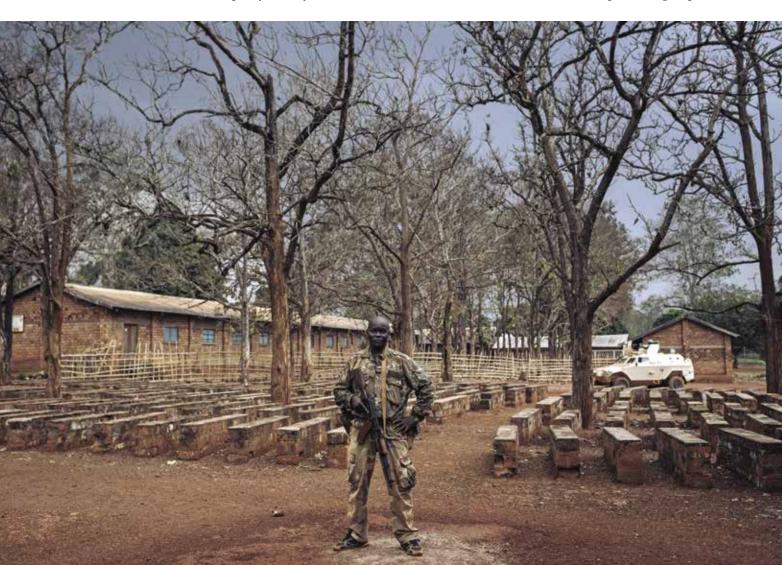
The election violence forced 120,000 people to flee for their lives, with half seeking refuge in neighboring countries.

The U.N. Security Council approved an increase of nearly 3,700 military personnel and police to MINUSCA in March 2021 to help reverse deteriorating security. A council resolution, adopted by a vote of 14-0 with Russia abstaining, brought the ceiling for military personnel to 14,400 and for police to 3,020.

The election in late 2020 may prove to be a pivotal moment in the nation's history. Only months earlier, the country recruited nearly 1,500 new officers to its internal security forces — 800 police students and 550 gendarmerie students, including 138 women. In the weeks leading up to the election, rebel groups began attacking the country's security forces. As Foreign Policy magazine noted, the international community was caught off guard as news spread of town after town falling to rebel groups.

A Central African Republic Army Soldier stands near the Bangassou Cathedral. Hundreds of rebels attacked Bangassou in January 2021, causing tens of thousands of people to flee.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





The president of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, greets supporters as he arrives at an electoral rally, escorted by his presidential guard, Russian security contractors and Rwandan U.N. peacekeepers, in December 2020.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

"Within days, Russia sent to Bangui 300 'military advisors,' then more troops and helicopters," the magazine reported. "Rwanda deployed hundreds of troops not 'constrained' by U.N. rules of engagement; and MINUSCA received reinforcements, including 300 (Rwandan U.N. peacekeepers) stationed in South Sudan."

The added manpower helped restore order in most towns. MINUSCA recaptured the town of Bambari, losing three peacekeepers in the process. The Central African Armed Forces (FACA), along with the Rwandans and a Russian private mercenary company retook the towns of Boali, Bossembélé and Mbaiki.

In 2021, Foreign Policy said, "ordinary citizens find themselves in even greater danger as the delicate balance of power shifts among local politicians,

international actors and armed groups."

Viola Giuliano of the Center for Civilians in Conflict told the magazine that "there are two defense forces."

"The first is the presidential guard, which has privileged access to equipment and means," she said. "The second, 'normal' FACA, is deployed outside Bangui in deplorable conditions. No fuel for patrol. Salaries not paid for months and rotations are often delayed."

BUSINESS IN AFRICA

Russia's interest in the CAR is part of a larger strategy — arms sales and expanded influence across Africa. Russia supplies almost half of the world's arms exports to the continent.

Because of political instability and human rights violations, the U.N.



imposed an arms embargo on the CAR and FACA in 2013. In December 2017, Russia obtained an exemption and supplied CAR with weapons and training.

Russia since has used this as an opening to take on a larger role in the CAR's security and other government affairs. The United States Institute of Peace reported that Russia has a "direct avenue" to the CAR government through Valery Zakharov, a former Russian intelligence official, who has served as Touadéra's national security advisor.

In 2019, Touadéra traveled to Russia to participate in the first Russia-Africa Summit, a gathering of hundreds of African leaders that the institute said was meant to "highlight and secure Russia's expanding influence in the continent."

After meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Touadéra reportedly asked for more Russian weapons shipments. He also said he would consider hosting a Russian military base in his country.

"Russian personnel in CAR, with additional troops in nearby Sudan, provide state actors to direct activities for Russia's benefit in rebel-controlled areas with great natural resource value," wrote researcher Kyran Goodison in a study titled "Russia in the Central African Republic: Exploitation Under the Guise of Intervention."

"The impact of controlling CAR's resources is enhanced by Russian seaport access in Sudan. Combined, internationally approved Russian arms and personnel for training create the means for Russia to exploit CAR's conflict," Goodison wrote.

WAGNER GROUP INVOLVED

The Russians in the CAR include the Wagner Group, an armed Russian private military company controlled by Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin. It is believed to be a thinly disguised arm of the Russian military, giving Russia deniability of involvement in other countries' affairs. The group has meddled in the affairs of countries throughout Africa and other parts of the world and has operated in at least 20 African nations.

The Wagner Group acts as a security provider in the CAR and has a major role in training the presidential guards and the Army. Some Wagner Group mercenaries are based in Berego Palace, which, in the 1970s, was the headquarters of Jean-Bedel Bokassa, then the country's self-claimed emperor, and has now been turned into a military base.

"Private military contractors like Wagner



Group, funded through local mineral concessions, plant a Russian flag in Africa," Foreign Policy reported. The CAR, "in turn, receives hands-on assistance for its armed forces that no other country is willing to provide."

The military news website Special Operations Forces Report wrote in 2020 that there were 180 Russian "official" army instructors based in the CAR, along with as many as 1,000 Russian "civilian" contractors from the Wagner Group in the country.

A NEED FOR REFORM

Armed rebel groups are one of the main drivers of instability in the CAR. They have forced people from their homes, disrupted trade routes and blocked humanitarian aid. Before MINUSCA deployed, there were three main recognized armed groups in the CAR. Now there are 14.

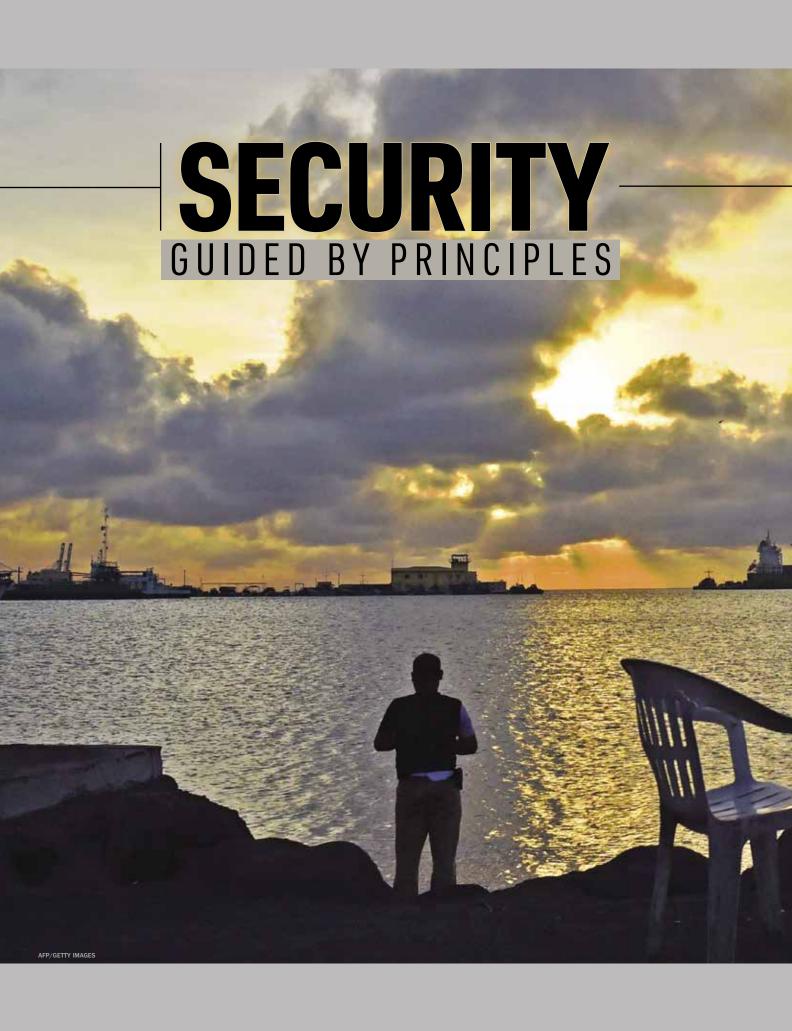
The country is in a state of crisis and is requesting outside help. Foreign Policy said the country received only 65% of its funding needs in 2020 and only 51% of its COVID-19 funding needs.

As the country tries to rebuild its Armed Forces and embark on security sector reform, observers point to mercenaries in the country as a hindrance, not a help.

"CAR is much more than a 'security vacuum' in the region," reported Foreign Policy. "In fact, many of the sources of the country's instability come from beyond its borders. But the increasingly international nature of the conflict, and the focus on military solutions, will continue to overshadow the socioeconomic roots of CAR's insecurity."

United Nations
peacekeepers and
private security
personnel protect the
convoy of Central African
Republic President
Faustin-Archange
Touadéra during
legislative elections in
March 2021.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





ADF STAFF

onflict among oil, gas and mining companies and the people who live nearby is nothing new.

In the Gulf of Guinea, artisanal fishermen follow their catch close to oil platforms, putting them at risk of injury. In West and Southern Africa, small-scale miners compete for deposits with giant multinational companies. Disputes sometimes end in bloodshed. And throughout the world, citizens voice anger that large corporations encroach on their land, pollute it and profit while they receive little in return.

To protect their operations, the extractive industry often turns to private security companies (PSCs). These companies vary widely in their training, professionalism and propensity to use force against civilians. Although they're paid to keep the peace, they can sometimes shatter it.

Africa has seen more than its share of violent clashes between PSCs and citizens. A study by the University of Denver analyzed 100 incidents of conflict between PSCs and the population. It found that 39 of these events occurred in Africa, the highest of any continent.

The Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) was designed to address this. Created in 2000 by the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom, the VPI is a member-based multistakeholder effort created to ensure that companies hire security professionals who respect human rights. The members include 10 countries; more than 30 of the largest oil, gas and mining companies in the world; and 14 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Members that sign the VPI agree to vet their security personnel, train them and work under strict guidelines for professionalism to avoid abuses.

"For our members, the kind of incidents that were much more common in the 1990s have all but disappeared," Mora Johnson, head of the Voluntary Principles secretariat, told ADF. "Our members operate at a very high level of proficiency and human rights professionalism. So we see fewer incidents."

RISK ASSESSMENT

When a company signs on to the VPI, it must conduct a risk assessment. This requires looking at all the areas where civilians might come into conflict with company personnel. The assessment must look at risks to the local population, which could include environmental damage, loss of resources, road traffic and violence. The company also must look at the risk to its own personnel, which could include protests, theft or property damage.

The VPI has found that this sort of advanced planning can help companies by forcing them to think about how their presence will affect the community.

"It's really critical to understand the context of the environment you're working in," Fidelix Datson, head of asset protection at Tullow Oil, a company that

PLAN FOR INTERACTIONS WITH PUBLIC SECURITY

As part of contracts, extractive companies often work with a host country's national military or police force. The VPI requires that companies have a process to ensure that these public security forces adhere to strict human rights guidelines and use force only as a last resort. The initiative asks companies to assess the knowledge and aptitude of these forces and work with host governments to make improvements where necessary.

The VPI offers model clauses for agreements between governments and companies that prioritize human rights. It also encourages the establishment of a clear chain of command.

Doug Brooks, operations director for the Fund for Peace, an NGO that has helped countries implement



These police officers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo are certified to train police working in the mining sector on how to comply with the Voluntary Principles. VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES



South Sudanese Soldiers walk through an oil field during a visit by the minister of petroleum. REUTERS

operates in Ghana, said during a webinar. "And that understanding goes back through to the historical understanding, through to understanding the community, the cultures and subcultures."

Once the assessment is complete, the company puts in place a plan to mitigate those risks. Risk mitigation includes strong human rights policies and procedures such as rules of engagement, screening and training for private security personnel, and creating a reporting and investigation process for abuse allegations.

It also asks that the company go out into the community to listen to people's concerns.

"It's humanizing the community in order to better understand where they're coming from," Datson said. "When you have these conversations with them, you realize you're trying to find the same solution but you're coming from slightly different directions." the principles, said during a webinar it is incumbent on companies to have a clear view of what role public security will play in protecting their operations. This, he said, requires asking some fundamental questions: "What is the training of public security? What is their human rights background? What are the rules for force that they follow when providing security?"

It is common for extractive companies to provide police or Soldiers with equipment, uniforms and even salaries. Because of this close relationship, he said, it is important that both sides are clear on what is expected. "Companies are kidding themselves if they claim they have no control of public security," Brooks said.

PLAN FOR USE OF PRIVATE SECURITY

The VPI emphasizes the hiring of PSCs that are ethical, well-trained and take a defense-first posture toward

conflict. Companies are asked to hire guards from the local population when possible and vet them to ensure that there are no past abuse allegations. The initiative also requires companies to investigate all events in which force is used and all abuse allegations.

The initiative has created a training course that lays out human rights and ethics, appropriate use of force, and the roles and responsibilities of security personnel. VPI members only hire PSCs that are certified by the International Code of Conduct Association.

"From my experience, there is now a kind of a tendency to have the private security personnel professionalized," said José Abad-Puelles, VPI policy director. "In previous years, we found out the lack of training, the lack of knowledge has been one of the Ghana has recorded some success. It developed a National Action Plan for implementing the principles. Leaders have held seven forums to discuss security issues. They also have trained more than 100 community members, local government officials and media representatives in five regions about how to report on human rights violations.

The country is building a knowledge base to improve its performance. The Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre and the University of Mines and Technology of Ghana are partnering to produce a curriculum to train private and public security forces. The country is conducting a baseline study of human rights and security across the extractive industry.





Malagasy police officers clash with protesters opposing the presence of a Chinese mining company that locals said was forcing them from their land and harming the environment. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

triggers of conflict and violence. Now there is a deep tendency to make them more professional, and it reduces these clashes."

GHANA LEADS THE WAY

In 2014, Ghana became the first African country to sign on to the initiative. With a robust mining sector led by gold and newly discovered offshore oil, the extractive industry is a major part of Ghana's economy.

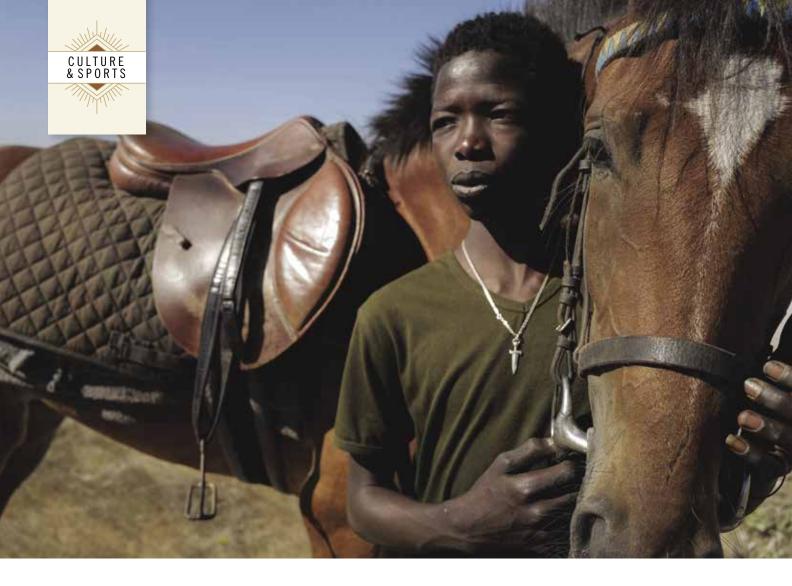
Then-Minister of Lands and Natural Resources Nii Osah Mills said in 2015 that Ghana wanted to join the initiative because there was a "growing consensus globally that transparency and respect for human rights are good for business."

Three of Ghana's largest companies in the extractive industry — Newmont Corp., Tullow Oil and AngloGold Ashanti — also are VPI members.

One other notable achievement occurred in 2018 when human rights advisors gave predeployment training to 425 Ghanaian Soldiers and police taking part in Operation Vanguard, a nationwide effort to clear out illegal mining operations.

Although Ghana remains the only African country to have joined the initiative, leaders are optimistic it won't be the last. There are working groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Nigeria.

"It would be wonderful to have more African governments become formal members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative," Johnson said. "What's more important is effective engagement to improve human rights on the ground, which can happen with or without formal membership of the national government."



Senegal's Teenage Jockey RACES TO FAME

BBC NEWS AT BBC.CO.UK/NEWS -

aving won Senegal's top prize two years ago, jockey Fallou Diop, 19, hopes to realize his dream of racing on an _international stage.

Often used for agriculture and transport, horses, donkeys and mules are an integral part of daily life in Senegal. And racing has rapidly grown into a national pastime.

"The elders taught us everything since we were young," Diop says. "And that's how I became passionate about horses. Since my grandfather, we've supported horses, then my father after him."

Diop was 12 when he decided to leave a tailoring apprenticeship and pursue horse racing. According to his father, he walked 10 miles to enroll in the

nearest training program.

Diop lives in a house with 12 other relatives in Niaga. With top prizes of up to \$600 per race, he has been able to pay for a new roof for their home.

Fallou Diop, 19, pets a young mare in Senegal. REUTERS

Diop and other jockeys in Niaga are taught by Adama Bao, whose family has maintained a stud farm for three generations.

Diop "is very gifted," Bao says. "He could compete up to 50 years with his weight and size."

Dressed in vibrant yellow and blue, Diop has raced at the racetrack in Thiès, Senegal's third-largest city. He finished first in three of his five races that day, taking home nearly \$1,000 in winnings.

— NEW NAMES A — —

CHALLENGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

ADF STAFF

ow do you pronounce "Gqeberha," the new name for the South African city of Port Elizabeth?

In an effort to rid itself of the last vestiges of colonialism and apartheid, South Africa is renaming some of its towns, cities and airports in the Eastern Cape province. Gqeberha is the Xhosa name for the Baakens River, which flows through the city.

Xhosa is one of South Africa's 11 official languages. It's also one of the few languages in the world that has a "click" sound, which can be difficult for non-Xhosa speakers to learn, including many South Africans.

According to the BBC, one tweeter reflected the views of many: "My Xhosa people. Teach us. How do you pronounce Ggeberha?"

Some have been giving each other a little help. One tweeter broke it down phonetically, saying the "Gqe" was a tongue click, "bear" for "be" and adding a guttural "g" before the ha: "Click bear gha."

"It will take a while for the majority of South Africans to learn how to pronounce the new name, especially white South Africans," Kwena Moabelo told CNN. "But it's a good move in order to keep the indigenous names and languages of South Africa alive."

Arts and Culture Minister Nathi Mthethwa announced the name changes. Government officials say changing some of the country's many colonial- or apartheid-legacy names will give black South Africans more of a sense of dignity and belonging.

White-minority apartheid rule ended in South Africa in 1994, but the country still has many place names that honor colonial rulers.

Some cities have, like the capital, Pretoria, kept their names, but the local government areas have been renamed. For instance, Pretoria is in Tswane Metropolitan Municipality, and the city of Durban is in eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality.

Port Elizabeth, South Africa, has been renamed Gqeberha.





FEMALE FOOTBALL REFEREES

In a League of Their Own

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

hree female referees made history at the African Nations
Championship quarterfinals in Limbe, Cameroon.

Referee Lidya Tafesse shows a yellow card during a 2019 match in France. REUTERS

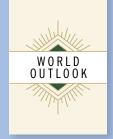
Ethiopian referee Lidya Tafesse and her assistants, Malawian Bernadettar Kwimbira and Nigerian Mimisen Iyorhe, became the first women to control a match at a men's senior Confederation of African Football tournament.

The breakthrough came two years after women handled matches at the African under-23 and under-17 Cup of Nations tournaments. Tafesse, a former professional basketball player, tolerated no foul play as she yellow-carded three Tanzanians within 10 minutes during the second half.

Male footballers often dispute decisions against them, but most accepted without hesitation the rulings of Tafesse and her assistants at the Stade Omnisport in the southwestern coastal resort.

Confederation refereeing manager Eddy Maillet from the Seychelles was pleased as the trio created history eight days into the sixth edition of the Nations Championship.

"The [championship] is the second-mostsenior national team competition in the continent after the Africa Cup of Nations," he said. "It is a wonderful platform for Lidya, Bernadettar and Mimisen to prove what they are capable of. They competed with male referees for places at this tournament, and now they have made history."



U.S. Trains Mozambican Forces Battling Insurgency AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

U.S. military personnel will spend two months training Soldiers in Mozambique to help the country fight an extremist insurgency in the northeast.

Insurgents have launched regular attacks in the gas-rich Cabo Delgado province since 2017, leaving at least 2,600 people dead and displacing at least 670,000.

In addition to the training, the U.S. plans to provide medical and communications equipment, the U.S. Embassy in Maputo said.

Mozambique has turned to private military companies to contain the attacks but has faced criticism from groups who accused mercenaries and government forces of harming civilians.

The U.S. Embassy said the training would prioritize respect for human rights. "Civil protection, human rights and community involvement are central to U.S. cooperation and are critical to effectively combating Islamic State in Mozambique," the embassy said.

The extremists pledged loyalty to the Islamic State in 2019. In March 2021, they launched a series of attacks and captured the town of Palma near the border with Tanzania, where they looted weapons and brutalized civilians. The Mozambican military retook the town in 12 days, but the insurgent group destroyed government buildings and banks during the occupation.

The U.S. State Department designated the group as terrorists in March, which allows for additional tools in combating it. In a statement announcing the training, the U.S. Embassy in Maputo said it plans a "holistic" approach to fighting violent extremism.

"This approach addresses socioeconomic development issues as well as the security situation," the embassy said.

Mozambican Marines stand in formation during a U.S.-sponsored exercise in 2019. ILS NAVY



Nigerien President Wins Prize for Stepping Aside

ADF STAFF

It's a \$5 million prize, and the rules are simple. To qualify, all an African president must do is leave office at the end of his or her term and have demonstrated exceptional leadership.

On March 8, 2021, Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou was awarded the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Excellence. He became only the sixth departing African head of state to win the prize since it was created in 2007 by Ibrahim, a Sudanese billionaire.

A former winner of the prize, Festus Mogae of Botswana, praised Issoufou for leading his country on a "path of progress."

"Today, the number of Nigeriens living below the poverty line has fallen to 40%, from 48% a decade ago," Mogae said in a statement. "While challenges remain, Issoufou has kept



his promises to the Nigerien people and paved the way for a better future."

Elected in 2011, Issoufou served two consecutive terms. His successor, Mohamed Bazoum, won election in a runoff in February 2021 and took office in April. This marked the first peaceful transition of power between elected presidents in Niger since the country's independence in 1960.

When asked why he chose not to amend the Constitution and run for a third term as other African leaders have done, Issoufou said he wanted to honor his word and follow the country's laws.

"I respect the Constitution, and I respect the promise that I made to the Nigerien people," he told the BBC. "This decision is in line with my convictions and my vision for what should be the democratic future of Niger."

Discussing the prize, Issoufou stressed that there is "life after power" and said he plans to create a foundation promoting democratic values, peace and pan-Africanism.

"I am filled with a feeling of pride," Issoufou said. "I feel honored, and through me, it is all Nigerien people who are being honored."

Ugandan Innovators Develop Rapid COVID-19 Test

REUTERS

Uganda launched a rapid COVID-19 antibody test that developers hope can help doctors track the virus more widely across Africa. The test, which requires a finger prick to draw blood, was developed by a team at Makerere, Uganda's oldest public university, with partial funding from the French Embassy. Ugandan scientists draw their diagnostic expertise from long experience with infectious diseases such as HIV and Ebola.

"This is a point-of-care test that can be used within equatorial Africa village settings, remote areas where there's no laboratory, there's no electricity, there's no expert," said Misaki Wayengera, a researcher at Makerere's Department of Pathology.

"We've had a history of developing rapid tests for infectious diseases. ... So when COVID came, we were like, 'OK, we have the skills, why don't we do this,'" said Wayengera, who also helped invent a rapid test for Ebola.

The kits work by detecting two antibodies, immuno-globulin M and immunoglobulin G, triggered when someone is infected with COVID-19, Wayengera said before the launch at Mulago, Uganda's national referral hospital.

Makerere partnered with local company Astel Diagnostics Uganda, a World Health Organizationcertified manufacturer, to make an initial batch of 2,400



A Ugandan health officer takes samples for a COVID-19 test from a truck driver at the Malaba Border Post near the Kenyan border.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

tests. Wayengera said they are talking to bigger investors about larger commercial production.

The kit, which has been approved by Uganda's state-run National Drugs Authority, has an accuracy rate of 70%, he said, but researchers hope eventually to raise that to 90%.

Although rapid testing is seen as key to combating COVID-19, many countries have struggled to find a cheap and easily available point-of-care diagnostic tool for mass testing.



ADF STAFF

here was a thunderous blast, flames shot into the sky and a dark cloud of smoke formed over a tree line near a military base in Equatorial Guinea.

Then came another explosion. And another.
More than 100 people were killed, including children, and at least 600 more injured by the explosions at Nkoantoma Military Base in Bata on March 7, 2021. Responders blamed the explosions on negligent handling of dynamite. Military depots holding explosives ignited when neighbors at nearby farms lit fires, Deutsche Welle reported.

The military camp was built in a forest far from the city, but Bata, with a population of more than 250,000, grew rapidly between 2004 and 2016. The area around the base became densely populated.

The issue of cities expanding around ammunition storehouses is familiar across Sub-Saharan Africa. Simon Conway, director of capability at the Halo Trust, a nonprofit organization that removes debris left by war, said the ammunition should have been moved to a safer location long ago. He added that explosive storehouses with earth buttressing in well-maintained areas are less likely to detonate.

"The blast radius around an explosive storehouse should be within the perimeter of the military base to reduce the risk to civilians in the case of an accidental detonation," Conway said.

Soldiers check a damaged house after explosions at a military base in Bata, Equatorial Guinea. REUTERS

Unplanned explosions of ammunition and explosives stockpiles are a recurring problem with about 15 such explosions globally each year. Explosions at munitions sites caused nearly 30,000 fatalities globally between 1979 and 2019, Small Arms Survey reported.

The most common factors in the blasts were lightning strikes and extreme heat, human handling errors, sabotage, fire, electrical issues, and chemical reactions within the stored ammunition.

The Institute for Security Studies has suggested that governments test their stockpiles of munitions, ammunition and weapons for stability and properly handle any material that does not perform to specifications.

At the request of Equatorial Guinea's government, technical experts from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining are working with members of the French Explosive Ordnance Disposal, U.S. Embassy and Golden West Humanitarian Foundation to support demining efforts and investigate the cause of the explosions, ReliefWeb reported.

Experts also will work to identify risks to the population and environment, address ammunition storage and handling concerns, and provide risk reduction and mitigation recommendations to national authorities.



CYBER DEFENSE EVENT IN DJIBOUTI AIMS TO SAFEGUARD INFORMATION

STORY AND PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN TAYLOR DAVIS/U.S. AIR FORCE

Modern security partnerships rely on the ability to collect, store and share information safely.

Improving information security and interoperability was the goal of a four-day conference in February 2021 in Djibouti. U.S. Soldiers assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) worked with Soldiers from French Forces Djibouti and the Armed Forces of Djibouti (FAD) in the cyber defense and interoperability engagement.

"In 21st century international defense, just as with diplomacy, economics and culture, information is a very powerful currency," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Lapthe Flora, CJTF-HOA commander. "It is shared, protected or lost to great effect."

The event was designed to improve the ability of participant nations to protect information and defend themselves from cyberattacks.

"We care about all of our partners' information security and want to be supportive of their information protection efforts," said U.S. Army Maj. Jake Day, special technical operations chief. CJTF- HOA.

The event brought together 27 participants from the three nations. The 200 Cyber Protection Team from Fort Gordon, Georgia, led the event, which began with instruction on equipment protection and then moved into network analysis.

"My favorite part was the first two days because we went over the different commands that show us how to better protect our equipment," said Capt. Amina Abdillahi Mahamoud, a telecommunication engineer with the FAD. "At the same time, we learned how to use the software to detect attacks and trace the source destination of malicious activities and delete it."

Participants agreed that the four-day engagement marked an important first step, but it won't be the last.

"Your efforts not only ensure that each of our commands is better prepared to face actors whose intent it is to slip undetected past our defenses and view the information we must protect, but you have made us better able to do so arm in arm," Flora said.

MAKES RECORD DRUG BUST

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

N igerien police seized a record 17 metric tons of cannabis resin worth about \$37 million in a shipment originating in Lebanon and bound for Libya, the nation's antidrug trafficking agency said.

The drugs had passed through the Togolese port of Lomé before being transported by truck north to the Nigerien capital, Niamey, more than 1,000 kilometers and two border crossings away, said spokesman Adili Toro.

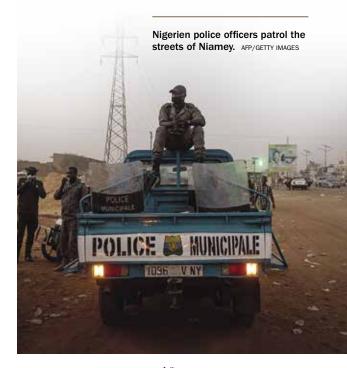
Officials seized the haul on March 2, 2021, from warehouses in Niamey. The traffickers had planned to transport the drugs in trucks to Libya via the desert town of Agadez, a hub for smuggling goods and migrants across the Sahara.

It is the largest cannabis seizure in Niger's history and the first shipment of drugs known to have come from Lebanon, Toro said.

Police arrested 11 Nigeriens and two Algerians in Niamey and Agadez, he said.

The West African coastal region is seen as a frequent stopping point for drugs such as cocaine and cannabis from South America and elsewhere heading to North Africa and Europe.

Côte d'Ivoire's security forces seized more than a metric ton of cocaine in the commercial capital, Abidjan, in February 2021.





VOICE OF AMERICA

uman Guinea worm cases in six African countries dropped to 27 in 2020, about 50% less than what was recorded the year before, despite COVID-19 challenges.

Animal cases fell by 20% over the same period. The figures were announced by the Carter Center, which has played a major role in pushing the disease to the brink of extinction. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter founded the center in 1982 to focus on neglected tropical diseases in humans and animals.

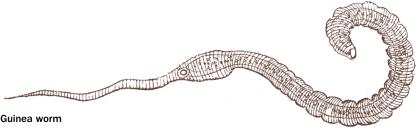
The disease is spread when hosts, including humans and dogs, ingest the worm eggs in unfiltered drinking water. The egg hatches into a worm, which grows and spreads down the body, emerging in the host's foot or leg.

In Chad, cases dropped to 36 from the 48 recorded in 2019 — the most significant decline for a single nation. This is down from an estimated 3.5 million cases in 1986.

The Central African country's significant decline in cases was attributed to "recommitted country

A boy fills a bucket in Lake Chad. Drinking unfiltered water from a lake or pond is the primary method of Guinea worm infection, but the disease has been nearly eradicated in Africa.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Guinea worm

and community efforts, innovation, and aggressive, science-based interventions," said Dr. Kashef Ijaz, Carter Center vice president of health programs.

Ethiopia recorded 11 cases, while Angola, Cameroon, Mali and South Sudan recorded one case each. The reduction in cases comes as COVID-19 overwhelmed public health systems worldwide.

"In contrast, the Guinea Worm Eradication Program is not dependent on the delivery of pharmaceuticals because there is no vaccine or medicine to treat the disease."

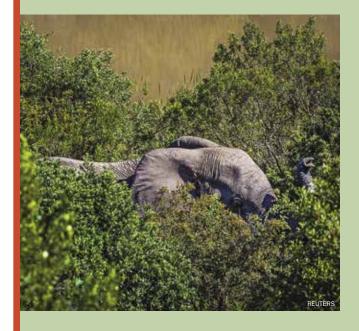
said a Carter Center news release, which also credited a communitycentered approach to dealing with the disease.

Out of the program's 1,026 employees, 1,000 are Chadian. The program also enjoys the services of nearly the same number of volunteers in the villages.

Guinea worm disease disables victims. In animals, dogs are the most affected, with more than 1,500 recorded cases in Chad, Ethiopia and Mali, followed by domestic and wild cats, as well as baboons, according to 2020 figures.

Satellite Tallies Elephants *From Orbiting Perch*

BBC NEWS AT BBC.CO.UK/NEWS



At first, the satellite images appear to be of gray blobs in a forest of green splotches. But on closer inspection, those blobs are revealed as elephants wandering among the trees. Scientists are using these images to count African elephants from space.

The pictures come from an Earth-observation satellite orbiting 600 kilometers above the planet. The breakthrough could allow up to 5,000 square kilometers of elephant habitat to be surveyed on a single cloud-free day.

All the labor-intensive elephant counting is done via a computer algorithm trained to identify elephants against a variety of backdrops.

"We just present examples to the algorithm and tell it, 'This is an elephant; this is not an elephant,' said Dr. Olga Isupova from the University of Bath in England. "By doing this, we can train the machine to recognize small details that we wouldn't be able to pick up with the naked eye."

The scientists first looked at South Africa's Addo Elephant National Park.

"It has a high density of elephants," said Dr. Isla Duporge, a University of Oxford conservation scientist. "And it has areas of thickets and of open savanna, so it's a great place to test our approach."

Conservationists will have to pay for access to commercial satellites and the images they capture. But this approach could vastly improve the monitoring of threatened elephant populations in habitats that span international borders, where it can be difficult to obtain permission for aircraft surveys. The scientists say it also could be used in anti-poaching work.

Kenya Swats Back at Locust Invasion ADE STAFF

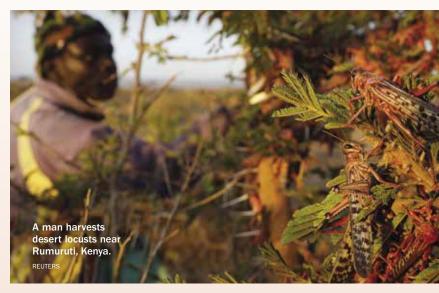
s East Africa has endured one of the worst locust invasions in 70 years, a Kenyan company is fighting back — by treating the voracious insects as a cash crop.

The infestation began in Kenya in late 2019 after a series of unusual weather patterns. The swarm soon began spreading east, into Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. A single swarm can contain up to 80 million locusts and can travel up to 150 kilometers in one day, depending on the wind.

As of early 2021, exterminators were getting the locusts under control. But a startup company called The Bug Picture also was contributing by paying people to harvest the invaders to be ground up and used as animal feed and organic fertilizer.

The locusts are typically gathered at night, after they have eaten. They have little energy to resist and are resting on shrubs and trees.

"We are trying to create hope in a hopeless situation and help these communities alter their perspective to see these insects as a seasonal crop that can be harvested and sold for money," Laura Stanford, founder of The Bug Picture, told Reuters.



The Bug Picture pays harvesters 50 Kenyan shillings, or about 46 cents, per kilogram of the insects. The gathering has to be done by hand because there are no machines adapted for such work.

The insects are crushed and dried, then milled and processed into powder. Harvesters are paid immediately, using a mobile platform, according to Euronews.



AU Website Protects Journalists

ADF STAF

he African Union has launched a website to monitor threats against journalists to protect them and support a free press.

The International Federation of Journalists reports that six African journalists were killed in 2020. Many more were threatened, arrested and censored, according to multiple media freedom and human rights groups.

The AU website will employ journalism's most critical tool: facts. The journalists' safety platform is planned to enable real-time response across Africa, to end impunity for attacks on journalists including harassment, arbitrary arrests, assault and killing. It also will serve as a database to keep track of attacks against journalists on the continent and track the punishment of attackers.

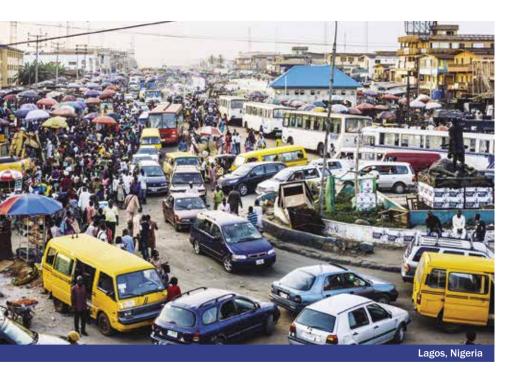
At the dedication of the site, officials mentioned journalists who have died in the line of duty.

"We stand on the shoulders of these giants, these heroes of the media in Africa in whose name we today launched this platform that is designed to help end the harassment, detention and even murder of journalists, just for doing their work," said Jovial Rantao, chairman of the African Editors Forum, as reported by Voice of America. "In some of our beloved continent, freedom of the media, freedom of expression, access to information, is a matter of life or death."

Salah Hammad, head of the AU African Governance Architecture Secretariat, said the AU believes honest journalism leads to thriving, peaceful societies.



People support journalist Khaled Drareni in 2020 in Algiers, Algeria. Drareni was imprisoned on charges of "inciting an unarmed gathering" and "endangering national unity." He was released in February 2021 after nearly a year in prison. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Nigeria Creates \$2.6 Billion Infrastructure Company

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The Nigerian government has approved the creation of a company to fast-track development of critical infrastructure, with \$2.6 billion in initial financing.

In 2020, Africa's most-populous country slipped into recession in its third quarter for the second time in four years, hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and a fall in oil prices. It faces a huge infrastructure deficit.

The company, Infra-Co, will be one of the top infrastructure finance entities in Africa and will be wholly dedicated to Nigeria's infrastructure development, officials said.

"It is envisaged that, over time, the entity will grow to naira 15 trillion (\$39.3 billion) in assets and capital," a spokesperson for Vice President Yemi Osinbajo said in a statement.

Infra-Co will operate as a public-private partnership and will be initially funded by the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority and the Africa Finance Corp.

It will focus on reconstruction and developing public assets, new roads, rail, power and other key infrastructure projects.

Financial experts expect Nigeria's economy to contract by at least 3% in 2021, a situation many fear will further deepen the country's infrastructure crisis and worsen an economy already struggling with the pandemic.

Nigeria's senate in 2020 approved nearly \$23 billion in foreign loan requests by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to support a series of large-scale projects, which the government hopes will revamp the country's infrastructure.

The country also has launched a \$1.96 billion rail project linking it to neighboring Niger as the country looks to boost trade.

Twitter Chooses Ghana for Expansion

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

witter announced plans to hire 11 people and open an office in Ghana, the company's first in Africa.

The social media giant joins Facebook and other tech companies moving into Africa, where founder Jack Dorsey spent a month in 2019.

"Africa will define the future,"

Dorsey said at the time, after visiting Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

The jobs advertised in Ghana include positions for engineering, marketing and communications specialists.

The company hailed Ghana as a "champion for democracy" and as a supporter of free speech, online freedom and the "open internet."

"Today, in line with our growth strategy, we're excited to announce that we are now actively building a team in Ghana," Twitter executives Kayvon Beykpour and Uche Adegbite wrote in a statement. "To truly serve the public conversation, we must be more immersed in the rich and vibrant communities that drive the conversations taking place every day across the African continent."





SHAKA ZULU

and His Deadly Spear

ADF STAFF

or a time, skirmishes between rival Nguni tribes in what is now South Africa were all bluster and no battle.

Opposing fighters would stand 35 to 45 meters apart, each armed with an assegai, a 1.8-meter spear, and a tall shield called an isihlangu. The warriors would throw the spears at each other, but because of the distance and the arc of the tosses, the spears were easily dodged. The "fighting" generally ended when both sides had thrown all of their spears, with no one injured.

Shaka Zulu of the Zulu tribe of the Nguni found the ceremonial speartossing to be a waste of time. In about 1800, Shaka fashioned a new type of spear called an *iklwa*. It was a stabbing weapon — more like a sword — shorter at about a meter and with a broader blade. Armed with this new weapon, Shaka would chase down an opposing warrior and hook shields, forcing his opponent's protection aside. Shaka would then stab his rival, usually fatally.

The traditional throwing spear was not entirely abandoned. It was used from long range to attack enemy formations before warriors closed in for hand-to-hand combat using the iklwa. The Zulu warriors also carried long-handled clubs.

When Shaka trained his followers with the new weapon, they became a dominant force. He also developed a set of attacking tactics called the buffalo formation. His main body of warriors were "the chest," confronting the enemy head on. Two flanks known as "the

horns" tried to surround the enemy, while a reserve called "the loins" remained behind in case the enemy tried to escape.

Shaka became a master of tactics, position and deception. In battle, he was ruthless. His was a system of total warfare. He taught his fighters to take no prisoners and instead kill every enemy to the last man. He was equally ruthless with his own tribe; every Zulu male was expected to be a warrior, and if a man failed to meet Shaka's exacting physical requirements, he was killed.

Some historians have described the Zulus as "the Spartans of Africa." It is said that Shaka forced his warriors to discard their sandals and harden their feet so they could run barefoot — faster and more agile.

Before the time of Shaka, the Zulus were a small tribe, consisting of about 1,500 people in a small territory of 26 square kilometers. By 1828, Shaka ruled 250,000 people and commanded

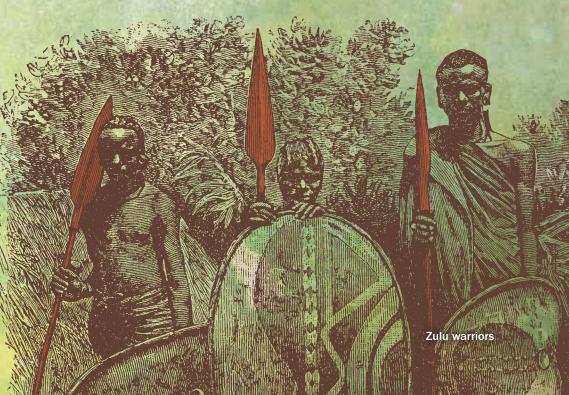
an army of 40,000 warriors. He was responsible for the deaths of as many as 2 million people during his reign.

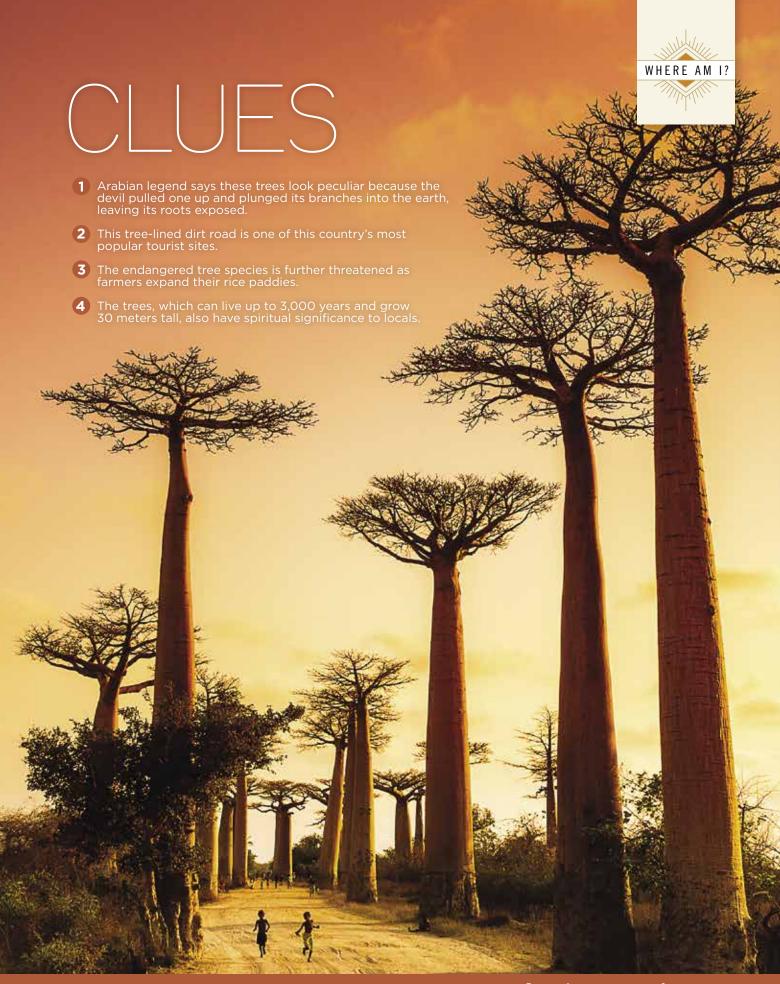
Neighboring and conquered tribes adopted his military methods and cruelty, leading to 25 years of chaos, slaughter and genocide, even after his death. This era is now known as the Mfecane, or the Crushing.

Shaka and his mother had been abandoned in his youth, and he sought revenge his entire life. His anger eventually turned him into a madman. On one occasion, he had 7,000 Zulus massacred for not properly grieving during a ceremony. In September 1828, his half-brothers assassinated him.

The memory of Shaka lives on in some dozen biographical books, as well as a television miniseries and a movie.

His legacy is clear: He changed the nature of warfare in Africa and made the Zulu tribe known throughout the world.





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