

Russia Confirms 600 More Instructors Sent to C.Africa

By [AFP](#)

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Six hundred Russian security instructors have recently been sent to the Central African Republic, the foreign ministry said on Thursday, bringing the total number in the country to 1,135.

The announcement came after the UN's envoy to the Central African Republic (CAR) accused the nation's security forces and their Russian allies of multiple human rights violations.

"One more group of instructors totalling 600 people (200 each for the military, police and the national gendarmerie) has arrived in Bangui," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP.

The statement said the UN Security Council had been notified of the move.

The additional deployment was first announced to the UN in May by the CAR.

The foreign ministry in Moscow said that in response to a request by the nation's authorities

Russia sent 175 instructors to the conflict-riven country in 2018, and that number grew to 235 later.

Another 300 instructors were sent to the country due to a spike in violence ahead of general elections in December, 2020, the ministry added.

"Russian specialists will continue to do their work taking into account the needs of the official authorities of CAR," Moscow said.

"None of them are directly involved in hostilities against illegal armed groups."

One of the world's poorest countries, the CAR has been chronically unstable since it gained independence from France in 1960.

The CAR's closer relationship with Moscow dates back to 2018, when Russia sent instructors to help train its beleaguered armed forces and supplied small arms, gaining exemption from a UN weapons embargo.

In an annual report in June to the UN Security Council, experts documented what they described as a range of abuses that breached international humanitarian law.

The violations — by CAR soldiers and Russians — "included cases of excessive use of force, indiscriminate killings, the occupation of schools and looting on a large scale, including of humanitarian organisations," the report said.

The UN experts, citing multiple sources, estimated that up to 2,100 Russian instructors could be in the country now.

Earlier this week CAR authorities said statements by UN experts were "slanderous."

The CAR has become a key area in the controversy over the role in Africa of the Wagner mercenary group which is allegedly run by the shadowy businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin, an ally of President Vladimir Putin.

Russia has denied Wagner paramilitaries have been deployed to the CAR, saying only military instructors have been sent to train local soldiers.

Under Putin, Moscow has sought to revive Soviet-era relationships and build new alliances in Africa, bolstering Moscow's global clout in the face of confrontation with the West.

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