

# Burkina Faso Ejects French Troops



*Vijay Prashad*

On January 18, 2023, the government of Burkina Faso made a decision to ask the French military forces to depart from the country within a month. This decision was made by the government of Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who [staged](#) the second coup of 2022 in Burkina Faso in [September](#) to remove Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who had seized power in a coup d'état in January. Traoré, now the [interim president](#) of Burkina Faso, said that Damiba, who is in [exile](#) in Togo, had not fulfilled the objectives of the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration, the name of their military group. Traoré's government accused Damiba of not being able to stem the insurgency in the country's north and of colluding with the French (alleging that Damiba had taken [refuge](#) in the French military base at Kamboinsin to launch a strike against the [coup within a coup](#)).

France [entered](#) the Sahel region in [2013](#) to prevent the southern movement of jihadist elements strengthened by the war in Libya, prosecuted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the past few years, [anti-French sentiment](#) has deepened in North Africa and the Sahel. It was this sentiment that provoked the coups in Mali ([August 2020](#) and [May 2021](#)), Guinea ([September 2021](#)), and then in Burkina Faso ([January 2022](#) and [September 2022](#)). In February 2022, Mali's government ejected the French military, [accusing](#) French forces of committing atrocities against civilians and colluding with jihadi insurgents. Burkina Faso has now joined Mali.

The ejection of France does not mean that there will be no NATO countries in the region. Both the United States and Britain have a large [footprint](#) from Morocco to

Niger, with the United States trying to draw African countries into its contest against China and Russia. Regular trips by U.S. military leaders—[such as](#) U.S. Marine Corps General Michael Langley (commander of U.S. Africa Command) to Gabon in mid-January – and by U.S. civilian leaders—[like](#) Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to [Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia](#)—are part of a full-court press to ensure that African states forge closer ties with the United States and its allies over China. The designation of Russia’s Wagner Group—which is [said](#) to be operating in the Sahel—as a “[transnational criminal organization](#) ” by the United States and the [U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#), held in mid-December, are both attempts to draw African states into a [new cold war](#).

Almost half of the Burkinabé population lives [below](#) the poverty line, and “more than 630,000 people are on the brink of starvation,” in the country, [according](#) to the UN. The country is, however, not poor with its gold export reaching [\\$7.19 billion](#) in 2020. These gains do not go to the Burkinabé people but go to the large mining companies. Ejection of the French military will not be the answer to these deep-seated problems faced by Burkina Faso.

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