

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نپاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Author: [Viktor Goncharov](#)

03.07.2024

The Failure of US Policy in Africa, as seen by Western Experts. Part One: The counterproductive results of the United States' global “war on terror” in Africa



Despite the fact that Washington has sought to maintain its military presence in Niger, formerly one of the main US allies in the Sahel region, and has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in developing its military infrastructure and training local armed forces, it nevertheless failed to achieve its goals and was forced to accept the harsh conditions dictated by the national authorities.

On May 19, 2024, military representatives of Niger and the US agreed that the withdrawal of US troops from Niger would be completed by September 15 this year at the latest. In fact this latest US retreat, which follows the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, actually began much earlier. The first group of US military personnel on board a C-17 Globemaster

III left Niamey airport on June 7 this year. This inglorious event was presented by the United States Department of State, in a joint statement by both parties, as exemplifying “the productive cooperation between the US and Nigerien armed forces”.

As of June 18 this year, the United States has already withdrawn about 30 per cent of its troops and about 700 more are awaiting evacuation.

Attempts by the State Department and the Pentagon to continue their relations with the new government on the same footing as before have not been welcomed by the latter. According to the British journal Flight Global, not only did these overtures fail to bring the desired results, they actually also led to the appearance of Russian servicemen personnel at the former US military airbase near the Nigerien capital, which was seen as a blow to American pride. The very fact that the Nigerien authorities allocated part of this base, which was built using American taxpayers’ money, for the deployment of Russian units, caused particular indignation among certain members of the US Congress, the journal notes.

Washington’s latest geopolitical setback

Following the arrival in Niger in mid-April this year of Russian military instructors who, without mixing with the Americans, settled in a separate hangar at Air Base 101 near the international airport in Niamey, the US news website Gateway Pundit described the loss of US military bases in Niger, its former “bastion of democracy” in Africa, as another geopolitical failure of Washington, following on the defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indeed, when the US launched its global “war on terror” in 2002-2003, the State Department estimated that there were nine terrorist groups in Africa. By 2023, according to the Pentagon, that number had risen to 6,756. This was despite the fact that throughout this twenty-year period, the US has been training the armed forces of African states from Mali in the west to Somalia in the east to fight against terrorist organizations alongside US special forces.

To fulfil these objectives, the US established a network of outposts and military bases across the continent, ranging from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, the largest US military facility in Africa, and Agadez Air Base 201 in Niger, to strongholds with small military contingents in countries from Libya and Niger to the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

But despite all this, as noted in the 2024 Global Terrorism Index report, after twenty years of the US global “war on terror”, the epicenter of terrorism has shifted from the Middle East and North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa, in particular the Sahel region, which now accounts for half of all terrorism-related deaths. Burkina Faso alone accounted for about a quarter of global losses caused by terrorism last year. In addition terrorist activity has spread from the

Sahel to the Gulf of Guinea. According to the Pentagon, in 2023 extremist violence in Togo and Benin rose by 633 percent and 718 percent respectively.

As the US website Tom Dispatch caustically point out, since the US began its global “war on terror”, the African troops trained by US instructors have achieved only one “success” – the overthrow of the governments that they were trained to protect.

Assessing US policy in the Sahel zone, former US Ambassador to Zimbabwe Charles A. Ray stresses that the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership program was too militarized and it achieved nothing, resulted in the waste of hundreds of millions of dollars, and led to civilian casualties, human rights violations and an increase in corruption. As a result the US position in the region has become so weakened that there are no clear signs of its recovery in the foreseeable future.

Instead of developing wide-ranging cooperation to help eradicate the root causes of instability, Washington has favored security engagement. But this approach is not working: violent radicalism is on the rise, states are on the verge of collapse, migration is increasing, trade is declining, and security threats are increasing, ultimately leading to more extremism.

Russia plans to help Niger increase the combat effectiveness of its armed forces

The Financial Times sees the withdrawal of US troops from Niger as another victory for Moscow in the Sahel zone. According to the Nigerien Foreign Ministry, Niamey is looking to Russia for help in improving the combat efficiency of its armed forces.

It should be noted that cooperation between Russia and Niger has been gradually gaining momentum in recent months. On May 4, the third Russian cargo plane with military equipment and instructors, as well as food aid for the civilian population landed in Niamey, according to Niger’s RTN television and radio network.

Earlier, on March 26, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Abdourahamane Tchiani, head of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, held telephone talks exchanging views on the situation in the Sahara-Sahel region with a focus on coordinating efforts to combat terrorism.

On June 2 this year, during a visit to Niger by Russian Deputy Defense Minister General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, in which he met with Abdourahamane Tchiani, the two sides expressed their desire to develop cooperation in the fields of defense, security and the economy. Given the growing terrorist threat, local sources have reported that Niger is interested in hosting a Russian military base on its territory.

Is Chad the new center of geopolitical rivalry?

After Niger, Chad was the next country to demand that the US withdraw its troops from the country. As the Spanish daily EL PAIS notes, Chad, which has large deposits of gold and crude oil, is home to the last major French military base in the region and which was considered an alternative location for the deployment of a US contingent (instead of Niger), is becoming a new center of geopolitical rivalry.

In early April this year, the commander of the Chadian US Air Force ordered a halt to all US operations at an airbase near N'Djamena, where 100 US special forces were training local soldiers.

For the US, the situation is complicated by the fact that President Mahamat Déby's government has recently intensified ties not only with Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, but has also turned towards Moscow. On January 24 this year, EL PAIS reports, he participated in a friendly meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin, in which the two leaders discussed military cooperation, among many other problems. "We intend to work with all the nations of the world, all the nations that respect us and want to work with us with mutual respect." the Chadian leader emphasized.

Given the strategic importance of Chad's location at the crossroads of North, West and Central Africa, from where foreign actors can project their military power over a large part of the continent, the country's rulers are keen to maximize the benefits of a foreign military presence on their territory in terms of helping the Déby dynasty retain their hold on power.

Having forced Washington to renegotiate the US military presence in Chad, President Déby intends to reach an agreement on more favorable terms to himself. Mindful of the fact that in 2021 French President Emmanuel Macron supported his rise to power following a coup d'état, Déby is also hoping that the current world hegemon will be able to ward off the current wave of anti-French feelings without damaging French interests.

02.07.2024

Viktor Goncharov, African expert, PhD in Economics, exclusively for the online magazine "New Eastern Outlook"