

US-backed Central African Republic coup leaders seek international support

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The Seleka rebel group that seized power in the Central African Republic (CAR) on March 24 with French and US support are now seeking to negotiate the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with other African states.

The African Union (AU) formally suspended the CAR from membership the day after the coup, during which Seleka forces clashed with an outnumbered force of South African troops. Some thirteen South African troops were killed in the fighting.

On April 3, African Union (AU) forces deployed in CAR in search of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony ceased operations, blaming their decision on threats from the Seleka forces. AU forces deployed against Kony, 3,000 strong, have withdrawn to military bases within the CAR. The majority of LRA fighters are active in CAR territory.

This was apparently a measure designed to pressure the imperialist powers. Since the release of a "Kony 2012" internet video last March, the US has demanded Kony's capture and has used the campaign against him to promote the operations of the Pentagon's Africa Command (AFRICOM).

The search for Kony provided the basis for escalating US intervention into Central Africa. Washington has already deployed at least 100 Special Forces personnel to nearby countries, including Uganda, South Sudan, and the Congo, ostensibly to aid the search for Kony.

Regional leaders were pressuring Seleka leader Michel Djotodia to take measures which will give the new regime a greater appearance of legitimacy, amid concerns that Seleka's brazen seizure of power would discredit it and the international institutions of the African bourgeoisie.

Djotodia announced upon taking power that he would reconsider lucrative contracts which his predecessor

had signed with the Chinese, implying that he will transfer those resources into European and American hands.

Since then, members of the Seleka rebel group have formed a provisional government, assuming control of key ministries: oil, security, defense and economy. Djotodia has taken the defense ministry portfolio for himself and will lead the government along with Nicolas Tiangaye, an international human rights lawyer who served as prime minister prior to the coup.

On Thursday, the CAR regime stated that it would abide by the demand of ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) leaders to hold elections for an interim President, whereas Djotodia had previously planned to rule by decree for a period of three years.

"I have discussed (the issue) with the head of state (Djotodia), who has given his agreement that this solution be chosen," said Tiangaye, after returning from Wednesday's ECCAS summit in the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. Under this plan, a newly elected council will play an executive role, overseeing a transitional period before a new president is elected.

"This is an agreement that will enable the CAR to come out of isolation, which will enable us to avoid being shunned by the international community. I see no reason why the Seleka should oppose it," said Tiangaye.

Washington and Paris are continuing to support the Tiangaye/Djotodia regime. Despite offering some formal criticisms of the violent takeover in Bangui, the US has not referred to the takeover as a "coup" because this would, legally at least, block any US support for Djotodia.

Djotodia announced upon taking power that the new government will invite the United States and France to

retrain the CAR armed forces.

The US responded to the AU announcement suspending the search for Kony by placing a large bounty on his head, listing him as a war criminal and offering \$5 million for his capture, along with additional bounties of \$5 million for his associates, Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen.

Underlying the imperialist interventions in Central Africa are struggles to seize control of key resources and markets. The US interest in waging war against Kony's band of rebels emerged in the wake of recent discoveries of massive oil resources in Uganda. CAR and Uganda share borders with the recently created South Sudan, which the United States has promoted amid conflicts with China over Sudanese oil resources.

For its part, France is scrambling to secure resource deposits in its former colonies across the African continent, with uranium at the top of the list. France relies on nuclear power for 75 percent of its electricity.

In January France launched a war in Mali and sent troops to protect uranium production sites neighboring Niger operated by French energy corporation Areva. French news magazine *Le Point* claimed was the first deployment of French Special Forces in direct defense of corporate assets. Niger had recently issued uranium exploration permits to Chinese and Indian companies.

Former CAR President Francois Bozize, who was deposed by the Seleka rebels under Djotodia, recently stated: "Before giving oil to the Chinese I met with [oil company] Total in Paris and told them to take the oil. Nothing happened. I gave oil to the Chinese and it became a problem."



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