

Burkinabè junta arrests top officers over Burkina Faso coup attempt

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29 September 2023

Last week, Burkina Faso's military junta said that it had thwarted an attempted coup on Tuesday. "The country's intelligence and security services have foiled the coup attempt against Burkina Faso's ruling junta by military officers and others plotting to seize power and plunge the country into chaos," the military said in a statement on Wednesday.

The failed coup attempt comes a year after Captain Ibrahim Traoré came to power in Burkina Faso through a military coup in September 2022. "I reassure of my determination to lead the Transition safely despite adversity and the various maneuvers to stop our inexorable march towards assumed sovereignty. THANK YOU to all Burkinabè people who continuously ensure citizen monitoring," said Traoré after the junta announced the failed coup attempt.

The Burkinabè military prosecutor's office indicated that it had opened "a detailed investigation on the basis of credible reports of a plot against state security." As a result, four officers were arrested and two more are wanted in connection with the failed coup.

"On the basis of a credible denunciation reporting a plot against state security in progress, implicating officers including two on the run and four arrested (... we) immediately opened a detailed investigation to elucidate the facts denounced," Prosecutor Ahmed Ferdinand Sountoura of the military prosecutor's office told the press on Thursday. In December 2022, the prosecution had already condemned the attempt to destabilize the regime and announced the arrest of soldiers.

The officers the junta has named as allegedly leading the coup attempt include:

*Lieutenant-Colonel Cheick Hamza Ouattara, who heads the Special Legion in the national gendarmerie;

*Captain Christophe Maïga, the second-in-command

of the same gendarmerie's Special Intervention Unit;

*Abdoul Aziz Aouoba, commander of the Burkinabè special forces;

*Boubacar Keita, director general of the Higher Institute of Civil Protection Studies.

The two other fugitive officers are former members of the National Intelligence Service. One is Commander Sekou Ouedraogo, the former Deputy Director General of the agency. Ouedraogo was relieved of his duties on September 13 by Traoré, the leader of the Burkinabè military junta.

The junta also announced the suspension of "all methods of diffusion," including print and Internet, for the French publication *Jeune Afrique*. Since 2022, the junta has already temporarily or indefinitely suspended several French television or radio channels, charging them with working to create chaos in the country. The military junta has already targeted LCI, *Libération*, *Le Monde* and France 24 specifically, as well as expelling foreign correspondents more broadly from French media.

News of the attempted coup spread across Burkina Faso on pro-government news media and social media. Thousands of pro-military government demonstrators took to the streets in Ouagadougou and elsewhere in the country on Tuesday to show their support for the current junta, after Captain Traoré issued public calls to his supporters to "protect" him.

While the nature of the coup threat and the activities of the officers named as coup leaders by the Burkinabè junta remains unclear, the essential political issues driving the conflicts in the Burkinabè military establishment are ever clearer.

The military junta in Burkina Faso, as in nearby Mali and Niger, came to power amid deep popular opposition to French imperialism's 2013-2022 war in

Mali and across the Sahel. Strikes and mass protests by workers and youth against the French and NATO troop presence led the military to oust discredited, pro-French presidents. The military juntas ruling Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali then asked France, the former colonial power, to withdraw its troops from their countries.

A politically explosive situation has emerged across West Africa. French imperialism is pressing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to prepare to invade Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Earlier this month, these three countries established a mutual defense agreement, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). This agreement specifies that they will respond to an invasion attempt against any one of the AES states as an attack on all three.

This conflict is also now deeply entwined with the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, as the Burkinabè junta led by Traoré develops military ties with the Kremlin. The Ukraine war thus threatens to spill across large parts of Africa.

This explosive global situation creates intractable divisions in the capitalist ruling elites of the AES countries, who maneuver between anti-imperialist sentiment of workers and youth, on the one hand, and their dealings with NATO imperialist countries on the other. It rules out the establishment of any stable, bourgeois-democratic regime that ends imperialist domination of the region and expels the imperialist powers from Africa. Instead, at every major political crisis and upsurge of class struggle, rival military factions vie for power.

French imperialism in particular has long experience of manipulating these factional rivalries of the African capitalist classes in its own interests.

Paris has backed countless military coups in its former African colonial empire since nominal independence in 1960. It has repeatedly used its extensive connections in African countries' officer corps to oust African regimes that criticized the neocolonial policies of Paris. In Burkina Faso itself, in 1987, the French government supported Blaise Compaoré's overthrow and murder of pro-Soviet President Thomas Sankara.

These factional rivalries among the local bourgeoisie also reflect the intractable social and economic crisis facing workers and the oppressed rural masses in the region.

More than two million people have been displaced and tens of thousands pushed to the brink of starvation by the fighting in Burkina Faso, one of Africa's worst refugee crises. Last week, officials said some 192,000 internally displaced people had returned to their homes after government forces recaptured various areas. Seventeen soldiers and 36 civilian volunteers were killed in Yatenga province in early September clashes with jihadi insurgents. Since 2015, more than 17,000 people have died in this violence in Burkina Faso alone.

Burkina Faso, home to about 23 million people, has seen two military coups in the past year. The number of people killed by rebels since Captain Traoré seized power in a second coup in late September has nearly tripled compared to the previous 18 months, according to a report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

"This violence, coupled with the geographic spread of extremist activities effectively surrounding Ouagadougou, puts Burkina Faso more than ever at the brink of collapse," the report said.

This explosive situation cannot be changed without the independent intervention of the working class in Africa. The entire history of former colonial countries shows that the struggle against imperialist provocations cannot be carried out without mobilizing the workers and youth against the bourgeoisie and its deep ties to imperialism. The essential question is to build a mass socialist, anti-war and anti-imperialist movement among the workers and youth across Africa, Europe and internationally.



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