

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Mali Claims France Funded Terrorists; France Denies

By Jason Warner
OE Watch Commentary

Tensions between France and Mali continue to mount. As the articles below—one from Mali, one from France—delineate, the junta leaders of Mali recently sent a letter to the UN Security Council accusing France of illegally violating its airspace to aid terrorist groups in the country, which France's years-long Barkhane counterterrorism mission has been in the country to fight.

The private Malian paper *Le Journal du Mali* reports that the ruling military junta in Mali, which came to power in May 2021, had sent the UN Security Council a letter claiming that it had proof of French violation of its airspace. It claimed that this occurred more than 50 times to collect intelligence and deliver arms to terrorists in the country. Malian diplomats went on to request a special meeting of the UN Security Council but ultimately provided no proof. For its part, as detailed in the second article from the private, left-leaning French editorial site *L'Opinion*, the French embassy in Bamako denied the claim. As the writer of the article pondered: "Is this [letter to the UN] a way for Bamako to designate an external enemy to veil its internal shortcomings?"

Such accusations—unfounded as they appear to be—play out against the backdrop of France's last nine years in the Sahel leading its Barkhane counterterrorism mission against groups associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. While France officially ended its Barkhane mission



French soldiers talk to locals in southern Mali in 2016.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane.jpg
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in August 2022, the ruling Malian junta and large swathes of the Malian population have taken to blaming the French mission not only for failing to stem the tide of jihadist violence, but also for offering support to such groups. Until now, such accusations have percolated in bilateral circles, angering French diplomats and even President Macron. Their elevation to the UN Security Council places them at unprecedented new levels.

These flagrant violations of Mali's airspace have served France to collect intelligence for the benefit of terrorist groups active in the Sahel, and to drop arms and ammunition to them.

Source: "Sécurité : le Mali accuse la France d'aide aux terroristes (Security: Mali accuses France of aiding terrorists)," *Le Journal du Mali* (private Malian newspaper) 17 August 2022. <https://www.journaldumali.com/2022/08/17/securite-mali-accuse-france-daide-aux-terroristes/>

In a letter dated August 15 and addressed to the UN Security Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mali accuses France of repetitive and frequent violations of Malian airspace by French forces. In the letter signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdoulaye Diop, he asserted that the Malian government has several pieces of evidence that these flagrant violations of Malian airspace have been used by France to collect intelligence for the benefit of terrorist groups operating in the Sahel and to drop arms and ammunition to them. The government underscored that it is because of suspicion of destabilization maneuvers by France that Mali firmly opposed France's request for air support for MINUSMA, so that "France does not use the UN mission as a pretext to carry out subversive operations aimed at further weakening Mali and the Sahel region." In addition, Mali requests that France immediately cease its acts of aggression against Mali, in the event of persistence, Mali says it reserves the right to use self-defense.

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Continued: Mali Claims France Funded Terrorists; France Denies

Source: “Le Mali accuse la France d’armer les combattants islamistes (Mali accuses France of arming Islamist militants),” *L’Opinion* (private French news site), 18 August 2022. <https://www.lopinion.fr/international/le-mali-ac-cuse-la-france-darmer-les-combattants-islamistes>

Is this a way for Bamako to designate an external enemy to veil its shortcomings internally? Mali said in a letter to the president of the United Nations Security Council dated Monday that France violated its airspace and delivered weapons to Islamist fighters in order to destabilize the country. Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop estimated that more than 50 violations of Malian airspace had been observed this year, saying most of them were due to the use by French forces of drones, military helicopters, or fighter planes.

The Malian government claims to be able to demonstrate where and when France would have delivered weapons to Islamist groups, it is added in the letter, without any proof being provided. Bamako requests the holding of an emergency meeting of the Security Council on the issue.

"France has obviously never supported, directly or indirectly, these terrorist groups, which remain its designated enemies throughout the planet", indicated the French embassy in Mali on Twitter, stressing that 53 French soldiers were dead in Mali in the last 9 years. These accusations come as France on Monday completed the withdrawal of French soldiers from Barkhane, a military operation aimed at fighting Islamist movements in the Sahel.



FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF

by Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.