

Summary

The situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains tense as the government is battling the militias of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) in the north and west of the country. The conflict near the borders of Chad and Cameroon has resulted in many casualties among civilians, peacekeepers, and the army. In order to combat the militias, the government has decided to open talks with the US-based Bancroft Global Development. However, the Wagner group and Russian supporters oppose this move, as protests against Bancroft have already taken place.

Recent events and developments

The situation in the CAR remains precarious. An ongoing conflict persists between various militias of the CPC and government forces supported by Wagner troops and MINUSCA peacekeepers. The militias focus their operation near the border with Chad and Cameroon, therefore the fighting has primarily taken place in the northern and western parts of the country. Improvised explosive device (IED) attacks have been common, primarily affecting civilians but also army personnel and peacekeepers. On 15 January a peacekeeper was killed by an IED and wounded another 5. However, violence against civilians and aid workers is not only perpetrated by militias. Around 25 February, Wagner mercenaries attacked vehicles of several NGOs in Ndjoukou. Misbehaviour of soldiers and mercenaries was also reported in Bangui such as beatings, torture, and illegal arrest of civilians. The country is also subject to a battle of influences between Russia and the United States. The Russian Wagner Group has become an integral part of the country's security apparatus since 2018. However, the Republic aims to diversify its security partners in order to reconstruct the national army. Bancroft Global Development, a private security company based in the United States, has confirmed negotiations with the government for potential future operations, including the training of army personnel. Protests against Bancroft presence have already taken place near the embassy of the United States in Bangui on 24 January.

Impact assessment

The ongoing fight with the CPC and its militias remains an unchanging source of instability for the CAR. The current conflict on the peripheries of the country is unlikely to deescalate as attacks and skirmishes between government forces and militias are constantly transpiring. The CPC is opposed to the rule of President Touadéra and has previously launched operations in 2020, 2021, and 2023 to overthrow the government. In 2021 the group launched an offensive against Bangui which was beaten back by government forces supported by MINUSCA and the Wagner group. The next elections will be held in 2025 and the rebels will likely increase their activity near the border with Chad; larger offensives towards the capital can also not be excluded. International presence in the country will likely increase as the US-based Bancroft Global Development will set up its operation. Some Bancroft employees are already present in the country, although not yet operational. However, although this development has the potential to improve the security situation with regard to the rebels, it can also become an avenue of conflict with the Wagner group. A Bancroft employee has already been arrested by the police with the help of Wagner mercenaries in February. Further tensions may rise and violence between the mercenaries is not out of the question. Additionally, more protests can be expected in the capital near the US embassy as pro-Russian demonstrators and Russian operators will try to put pressure on the government to withdraw from the cooperation with Bancroft.

Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to the CAR receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Refrain from travelling to border regions with Chad and Cameroon.
- Closely monitor the local and international media for updates on the situation.
- Ensure that contingency and security plans are up-to-date and that staff are aware of them.

Customized advice

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