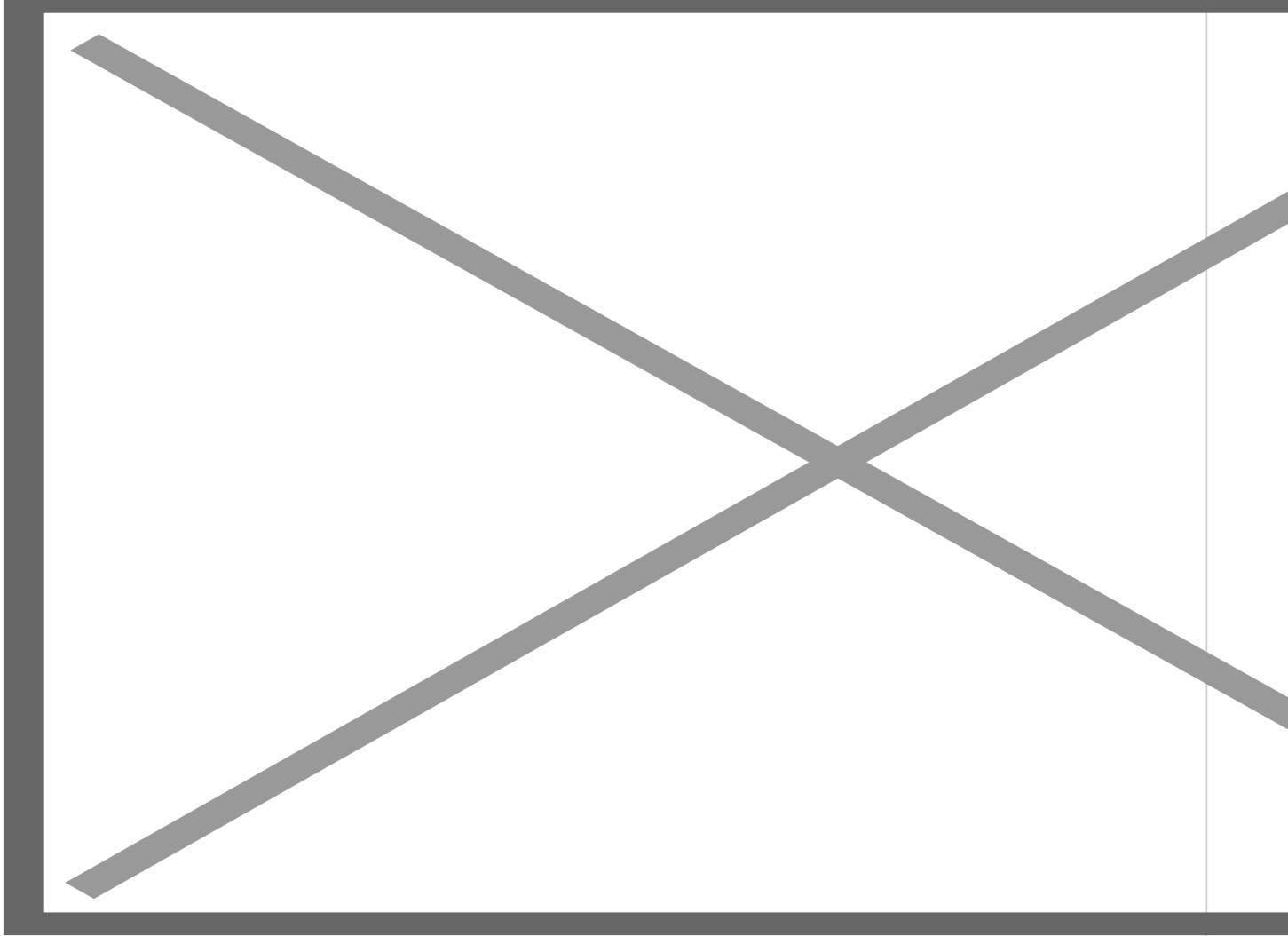


Emmanuel Macron begins African tour amid protests over French presence in former colonies

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French President Emmanuel Macron has declared the era of French interference in Africa is over, as he embarked on a four-nation tour of the continent.

Paris, March 3 (RHC)-- French President Emmanuel Macron has declared the era of French interference in Africa is over, as he embarked on a four-nation tour of the continent.

Last week, Macron pledged to reduce France's military role in Africa, after recent withdrawals from Mali and Burkina Faso. France's efforts to stem attacks from Islamist insurgents in the Sahel have largely failed. But Macron said France intends to maintain a presence in its former colonies "with a reduced footprint," amid Western concerns of growing ties with Russia and China.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo — a former Belgian colony — protesters gathered outside the French Embassy in Kinshasa this week. They condemned Macron's visit and demanded France pressure Rwandan President Paul Kagame to stop supporting M23 rebels in the DRC.

One protester told reporters: "France finances terrorist groups here in Africa, in several African states, in the Congo. So, recently, Mr. Macron came to placate us, the Congolese, but the Congolese people are not duped."

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