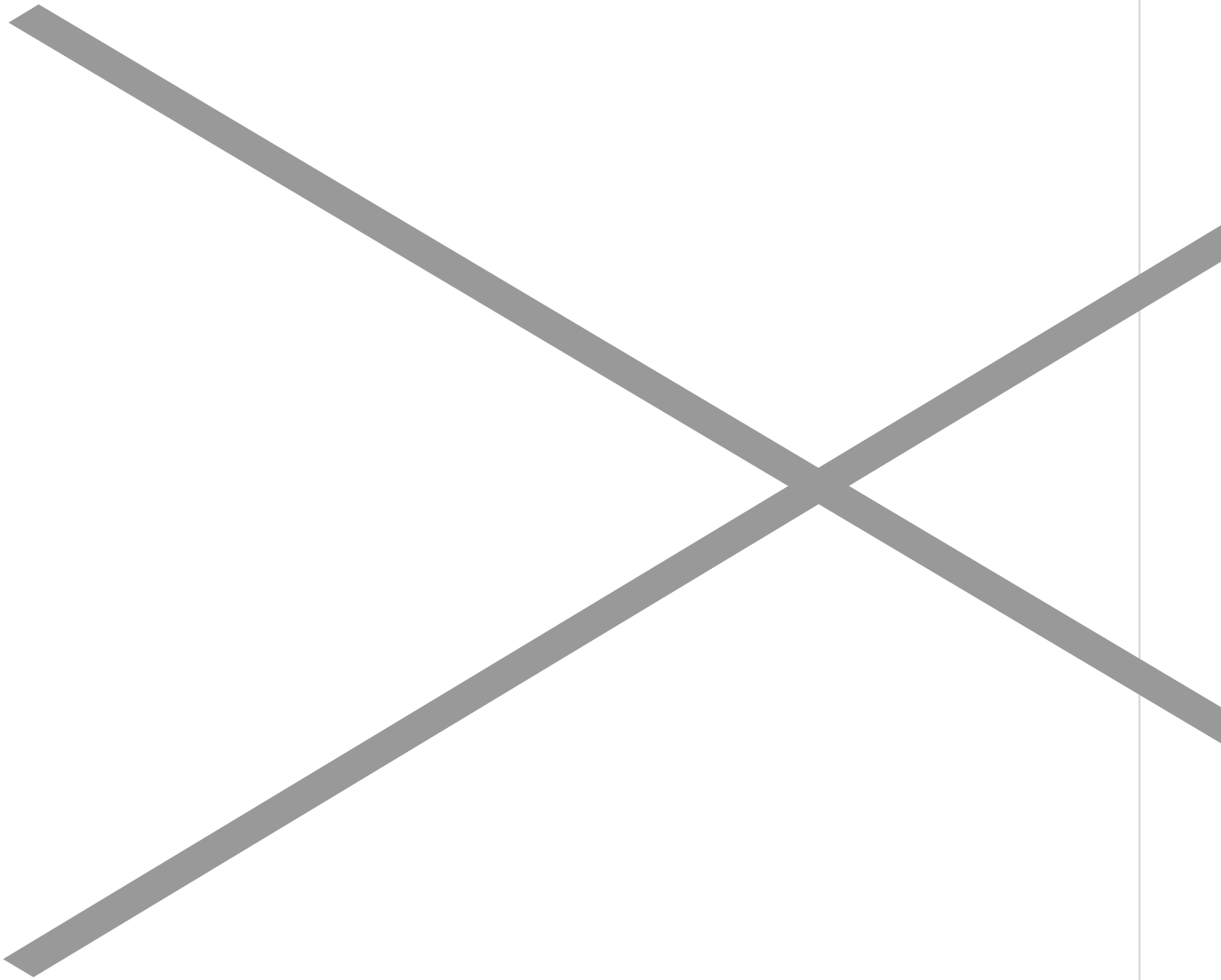


Army reports France begins withdrawing military troops from Chad

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People wave the national flag of Chad during a protest against the French military presence in N'Djamena. Photo: EPA

Paris, December 11 (RHC)-- France has begun withdrawing its military troops from Chad, starting with the removal of two warplanes from the Central African nation, the French army says, days after the former French colony announced it was terminating its defense pact with Paris.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, French military spokesperson Col. Guillaume Vernet announced that two Mirage 2000-D fighters departed after midday from a French base in the capital, N'Djamena, and were en route to an air force base in Nancy, eastern France.

"It marks the beginning of the return of French equipment stationed in N'Djamena," he said, adding that a calendar to draw down its operations would still take several weeks for the two sides to finalize.

Vernet stressed that talks with Chadian officials are ongoing regarding the timing and method of France's withdrawal of the remaining 1,000 troops in the African country, and whether all will be leaving.

Chad has been an ally for France in its alleged counterterrorism mission and one of the last countries where France kept a significant military presence. However, French forces have been driven out of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso in recent years after purportedly fighting Takfiri terrorists with local troops. These African countries have since aligned more with Russia.

In a surprise move on November 28, Chad announced the end of its defense agreement with France, calling it a turning point for the country and stressing that the move would allow the African nation to realign its strategic partnerships with its national priorities.

The withdrawal from Chad will mark the end of decades of French military presence in the Sahel and conclude France's so-called operations against Takfiri terrorists in the region.

Hundreds of people marched in N'Djamena last week, demanding the removal of French troops and chanting "Chad for us, France out." Some held banners that read, "We do not want to see a single French person in Chad."

Chad's Army spokesperson, Chanane Issakha Acheikh, confirmed the departure of the French warplanes, adding that the public would be updated on the withdrawal "until the definitive departure of the (French) forces."

The landlocked country sitting at the crossroads of North and Central Africa has been on edge since the death of longtime ruler Idriss Deby in 2021, after which his son, Mahamat Idriss Deby, seized power.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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