

# *French troops begin departure from Chad*

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N'Djamena, December 21 (RHC)-- France began withdrawing soldiers on Friday from Chad, the Chadian Defense Ministry said. A contingent of 120 French soldiers has left Chad following the country's decision to end its defense cooperation pact with Paris.

French troops were seen boarding their plane on Friday and departing from N'Djamena airport. The withdrawal process formally began earlier this month with the departure of two French Mirage warplanes.

France still has about 1000 troops stationed in Chad, with the full drawdown expected to take several weeks. The terms and conditions of the complete withdrawal, including whether any French troops will remain in Chad, are yet to be finalized between the two countries.

Chad announced on November 28th its decision to end a defense accord with Paris mainly dating from independence in 1960. "At midday, 120 French soldiers took off from the military airport of N'Djamena on board an Airbus A330 Phoenix MRTT, headed for France," the ministry said in a statement on Facebook.

The departure of French soldiers took place in the presence of Chadian military authorities, the statement said. The United States says it plans to withdraw part of its troops from Chad days after announcing the pullout of forces from neighboring Niger.

The move comes after France had already pulled its forces out of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in recent years. This departure signals the end of decades of French military presence in the Sahel region as the anti-French sentiment continues to grow.

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