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From Wagner to Africa Corps: Selective Absorption and the War It Inherited

Wagner did not leave Africa. Its men stayed under a Defense Ministry flag, while Prigozhin's money and autonomy were cut away. Also here: Redut, Konvoy and Patriot, Ukraine's role at Tinzaouaten, and why the new system keeps losing in Mali.

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The move from Wagner to Africa Corps is usually described as a clean replacement. This report, dated June 19, 2026, argues that it was a selective absorption. Whatever of Prigozhin's legacy the Kremlin could subordinate was kept, and whatever made Wagner independent was cut away. It then follows the new system into the field, where it has inherited Wagner's wars along with its men.

What survived the shift from Wagner to Africa Corps

Mali is the clearest case. Wagner announced its departure on June 6, 2025, yet most of its personnel simply stayed on under the Defense Ministry's brand. The combat units, the operating model and the resource networks survived. Prigozhin's own money flows and media operation did not. The report separates the FSB-linked media infrastructure from Wagner's operational influence arm, and on the second it parts company with the investigative consensus: the author does not believe the arm went to the SVR.

It also traces how recruitment, contracts and deployment were brought under the Ministry of Defense, from official Telegram channels to the selection point at Molkino, with embassies kept out of the process.

Redut, Konvoy, Patriot

Africa Corps does not operate alone. The report maps three structures around it and the people investigations link them to — Konstantin Mirzayants and Redut, Konstantin Pikalov and Konvoy, and the more weakly documented Patriot. Several smaller and controllable formations in place of one dominant Wagner, it argues, is a deliberate choice drawn from the lesson of the 2023 mutiny.

The war it inherited

The last section turns to the fighting. Clashes are a structural feature of the Russian presence, not an exception, and Ukraine has made Africa one of the theaters of its war against Russia.

“ The weightiest and now officially confirmed episode is not Sudanese but Malian: the battle of Tinzaouaten (July 25–27, 2024) near the Algerian–Malian border. The Tuareg coalition CSP-PSD (with JNIM participation) ambushed and destroyed a column of the Malian army and Wagner (the Wagner 13th Assault Brigade was involved). Dozens of fighters died — by the rebels’ claims, total losses exceeded 130, including Russians, making it the bloodiest single day for Wagner in its entire African history.

The key aspect: Ukraine’s involvement here is not a theory but an admission. HUR spokesman Andriy Yusov stated that the rebels had received “the necessary information,” and this was confirmed by Ukraine’s ambassador to Senegal. The same Ukrainian campaign was also waged in Syria (strikes by HUR’s Khimik group on Russian facilities near Aleppo, at the Kuweires airfield, and in the Golan in 2024) — which shows that this is a system, not isolated local operations.

Sergey Konyashin, From Wagner to Africa Corps: Selective Absorption and the War It Inherited (Africa Now, Démarche, June 19, 2026)

Yet the report warns against reducing everything to Ukraine. The heaviest blows come from Tuareg separatists and jihadists, from Tinzaouaten to the loss of Kidal in 2026. Sudan adds a different kind of conflict, where support for the Rapid Support Forces set Russian mercenaries against the regular army. The road from

ABOUT

I am Sergey Konyashin, a former Russian diplomat. I spent nearly a dozen years in the Russian Foreign Ministry, with postings in Yemen (2010–2013), Sudan (2014–2018) and Algeria (2019–2021), and left Russia in 2022, after Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Démarche is my independent journal on Russian policy in the Middle East and Africa: analysis from inside the system, for readers outside it. I also write for *The Moscow Times*, *Republic*, *The Insider* and other independent outlets; see konyashin.com/elsewhere for that work.

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