

Niger coup: France evacuating citizens after embassy attack

France has begun evacuating its citizens from Niger amid anti-French sentiment following last week's coup.

The first of three French planes sent to evacuate European citizens took off from the capital, Niamey.

The coup has prompted demonstrations against the former colonial power, with the French embassy coming under attack.

However, France says it has no plans to repatriate about 1,000 French soldiers stationed there as part of efforts to counter Islamist militants.

Germany has urged its nationals to take up France's offer to help other Europeans and Italy is also organising a flight.

It comes as the juntas in Burkina Faso and Mali warned that any forcible attempt to restore the ousted president would be seen as a declaration of war.

The two neighbours, also former French colonies, have both moved away from France and towards Russia, after staging their own coups in recent years.

Their warning marks a significant twist that could escalate the volatile situation in a region battling an Islamist militant insurgency.

Niger, which is rich in uranium, has been a key Western ally in the fight against jihadist extremism in the Sahel. Both France and the US have military bases there.

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