

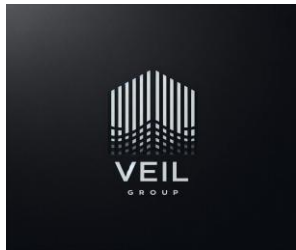
AFRICOMM

1

**Securing Africa's Future: From physical security operations  
to the 4<sup>th</sup> plane of warfare**

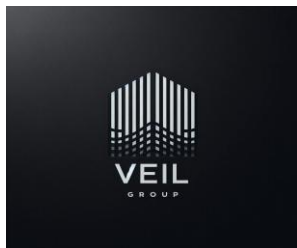
Veil Group International

October 27, 2024



## CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	3
Privatized Security on the African Continent is a Gray Line.....	4
Wagner folded, now what?.....	5
Opportunities for Digital-Domain Security .....	6
Conclusion .....	7

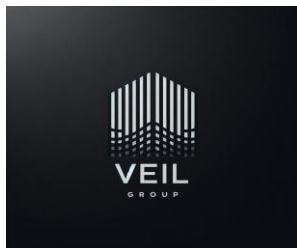


## Executive Summary

This white paper is a call for fundamental scale tipping. Russian influence on the African continent continues to grow at an alarming rate for both Western governments and African nations. Some of this rise can be attributed to a long history of civil war, while most should be viewed through the lens of Russian expansionist campaigning. Being a developing continent with no shortage of potential, all corners of the world are watching Africa.

Most of the Russian influence on the continent has been gained through violence, on behalf of the nations it is providing security solutions to. In return, Russia is paid in mining investments, further deepening ties between the Eastern Bloc and Africa as a whole. As an exercise in footprint expansion, Russia took over and reformed operations by its' private military contractor The Wagner Group, after the death of Wagner's head in 2023, forming the Expeditionary Corps, better known as the Africa Corps. Effectively folding all physical security operations on the continent that were once distantly associated on paper, firmly under the Russian bloc.

While the Western world has a footprint in West Africa, it is less than marginal and is meant as a bastion to counter-terrorism operations in the region. Russia has succeeded in its control campaign on the simple fact that African national defense forces are lacking in manpower, resources, and training, being forced to rely on outside help, and accruing outside influence.



While there is some recognition that the Western world is reticent to involve itself fully in African affairs, there is precedent for assistance that has mass potential in countering Eastern influences as Africa continues to advance. Opportunities for digital security assistance are abundant, wanted, and necessary. This paper aims to explore the validity of providing those services to Africa, any impact those services would have on encouraging self-reliance, and therefore uprooting long-standing eastern influences on the continent.

## Privatized Security on the African Continent is a Gray Line

Africa's Institute for Security Studies published a paper in 2021 that read in part:

“Outsourcing government security requirements to private entities or security operators presents a serious challenge for Africa’s security.” The report goes on to state that there is an overreliance on external security operations for domestic protection on the continent. “From a ‘hard’ security standpoint, this entails strengthening public security systems and capacitating the police and army to deal with less traditional threats. The practice of resorting to private security providers, particularly when threatened, shouldn’t become the norm.” Some, but not all, of this dependent relationship stems from inadequate training for individual national defense forces, which leads to parts of the African continent closing gaps in security through alternative means. In 2021, the Institute for Security Services was growing more alarmed at the presence of the Russian-affiliated Wagner Group in Mali. The rise of Russian influence on the African continent is not a new phenomenon. The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) found that 80% of all weapons systems in Sudan have come from Russia post-2003. FPRI’s Eurasia program created a guide on Russian incursion tactics in Mali, calling it “Wagner Group’s Playbook in Africa: Mali”. There is



no small amount of written knowledge where Russia and Africa lie on a pseudo-militaria level.

The rise in Russian influence and the increase in Wagner's hold on North and West Africa have prompted responses from surrounding states, each looking to have the best defensive posture available to them. Hence, the rise of private military/security contractors on the continent. The United States, on the other hand, while no stranger to the employment of private military/security contractors, holds that US citizens employed, contracting for or with, and in any way affiliated with defense services, are not allowed in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. Russian incursion needs to be cured, but cannot be cured as a symptom of a broader policy. The rise of Russian influence in Africa was therefore predictable, allowable, and driven.

## Wagner folded. Now what?

It must now be pointed out that the Wagner Group no longer operates in Africa. Its former members do. In the summer of 2023, after the death of Wagner's leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, Russia folded the existing Wagner infrastructure in theater, into its' Expeditionary Corps, or the "Africa Corps", as it is better known. Africa wanted Wagner out, in their place they received mainline Russia. Wagner was paid for services rendered via mining investments in Sudan and the Central African Republic; in Mali, these investment opportunities were barren. Russia, ostensibly, is in Africa to combat terrorism in places like Burkina Faso, not to enrich itself. Western governments have so far refused to assist in Ukraine with physical deployments and troop movements; therefore, we can expect nothing less in Africa as Russian influence on the continent grows. However, the US and its Western allies have the unique opportunity to combat



Russian influence through physical operations, with cyber responses of their own. Africa may be behind the techno-ball, but it continues to catch up. Instituting cybersecurity from the west, while allowing Russia to run its course on physical presence, may well buy better will from the African continent.

## Opportunities for Digital-Domain Security

As Russia consolidates influence on the continent through physicality and the pretense of direct support, there remains a future-proofing opportunity for the Western world to influence the next generations of Africa. "...and the agreement on the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime drafted while being chaired by an African Union member State is a reflection of actions being taken to ensure that Africa's voice and common position is heard at a global level and a mark of working towards achieving Aspiration 7 of Agenda 2063." (*Africa at Forefront of Championing Cybersecurity and Digital Transformation in the Global Arena* | *African Union*, n.d.) Africa is doing much of the legwork itself; the Western world would be remiss, however, not to capitalize on assisting the continent in cyber-practice. A robust cybersecurity infrastructure is the key ingredient (per the World Economic Forum) that will allow Africa to better participate in global markets and capture investments at home. Given the conglomerate of international businesses operating in Africa, it would be a strategic loss for the Western world to fail in assisting Africa's foray into digital security.



## Conclusion

Africa is at a tipping point with developed nation influence. While strategically aligned for domestic security, the Russian influence campaign stops there. The need for Africa to continue its path to accurate recognition on the global stage will now take place digitally. Africa remains a bastion for international companies and investment opportunities, solidifying that the continuum will come from robust infrastructure and security practices that protect both the continent as a whole and the companies that elect to maintain operations there.



## References

*Africa at forefront of championing cybersecurity and digital transformation in the global arena* | African Union. (n.d.). <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240816/africa-forefront-championing-cybersecurity-and-digital-transformation#:~:text=In%202024%2C%20several%20key%20instruments%20and%20frameworks%20have,Nations%20Summit%20of%20the%20Future%20in%20September%202024.>

*Africa needs to improve cybersecurity to boost investment.* (2024, September 10). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/08/africa-must-act-to-address-cybersecurity-threats/>

*Country Policies - DDTC Public Portal.* (n.d.). [https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/ddtc\\_public/ddtc\\_public?id=ddtc\\_public\\_portal\\_country\\_landing](https://www.pmddtc.state.gov/ddtc_public/ddtc_public?id=ddtc_public_portal_country_landing)

*Mercenaries and private military security: Africa's thin grey line* | ISS Africa. (n.d.). ISS Africa. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/mercenaries-and-private-military-security-africas-thin-grey-line>

Parens, R. (2022, March 18). *The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Retrieved November 1, 2024, from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/>