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Four Israelis arrested in Guinea, suspected of plotting coup



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Four Israelis arrested in Guinea, suspected of plotting coup

Intelligence reports claim the mercenaries tried to incite violent riots against president

Four Israeli mercenaries were arrested in Guinea last week on charges of planning a coup and inciting violent riots, reported the French newspaper Le Canard enchaîné.

According to the report, last Wednesday Guinean armed soldiers barged into the houses of the Israeli men in the midst of night and arrested them on charges of involvement in a criminal act.

The men are held at the island of Casa, north of the Guinean capital Conakry, a prison for political activists.

Guinea voted on Saturday in a parliamentary election touted as the completion of its transition to democracy after a 2008 military coup and the end to decades of political instability.

The elections were held in an atmosphere of tension amid the political violence that has killed dozens in the run-up to voting, and the publication of two French and American intelligence documents, which claim that French, South African and Israeli mercenaries planned a coup in the African country.

The French document discussed "acts that were being done in order to destabilize the country, acts that could endanger the regime." According to the document, "those acts were intended to encourage the Guinean police and army to use force against innocent citizens."

The CIA document says opposition parties were being funded by outside parties and the recruitment of Fula people – an ethnic minority in Guinea who opposes President Alpha Conde's regime – was under way.

Meanwhile, The Israeli billionaire Beny Steinmetz has threatened to sue Le Canard enchaîné after it published a story claiming Steinmetz was also involved in the plan to oust the Guinean president.

The Geneva home of Steinmetz, the natural-resources investor, was raided earlier this month by Swiss police following a request by the government of Guinea.

According to Le Canard, Steinmetz allegedly tried to set up a plot to destabilize and overthrow the government in Guinea amid financial row over the country's largest undeveloped iron ore deposit in the world.

Steinmetz's lawyer Marc Bonnant said in an e-mailed statement that Steinmetz is undeterred by the actions of Guinea and the "campaign of intimidation and malicious lies, which are an attempt to damage his impeccable reputation."

BSG Resources Ltd., Steinmetz's mining company, owns a 49 percent stake in a venture that controls half of the giant Simandou iron ore deposit in Guinea. The West African country is reviewing mining licenses including Simandou's, once described as the largest untapped deposit of the steel-making raw material in the world.

In April, a US grand jury investigation began into claims that bribes were paid by BSG Resources for mining rights in Guinea.

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