

Mercenaries in Africa

Developed for:

Research, Analysis, and Recommendations
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Executive Summary

Mercenary organizations are ever present in Africa with one particular Russian mercenary organization, the Wagner Group (Wagner), with a heavy presence on the continent. Their forces are deployed in great number in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Libya, and Mozambique. Wagner also hosts offices in many other nations and is presently making an entrance in Mali. This report seeks to document Wagner's influence in the country and their ties to the Russian oligarchy and Central African Republic government. Our report also included research into business and industry connections to determine if there were any US entities inadvertently doing business that would financially benefit Wagner.

To better understand the problem, we conducted a macroanalysis of the environment in the Central African Republic as well as a detailed business model analysis of the Wagner Group. After completing a background analysis, our team put together a network analysis, tying Wagner into Russian companies operating in Africa, including two mining companies, Midas Ressources operating in the Central African Republic and Ferrum mining operating in Madagascar.

During our research into Wagner and the network analysis, we uncovered a government proposal for a mining code in the Central African Republic that would financially benefit Wagner by allowing one of the mining companies, Midas Ressources, to circumvent utilizing a new broker agency the government was attempting to create with the new code. Further, this broker, GEMINCA, would have the ability to take on shareholders (presumed Russian) and hire Wagner to protect its interests.

With this knowledge, we concluded any gems and minerals leaving the country, should the draft code be passed, would financially benefit Wagner given their relationship with Midas Ressources and GEMINCA. As such, we recommend uncovering which US companies import gems and minerals from the Central African Republic given the new beneficiaries of these trades should the draft code pass, as well as furthering the research we have done in our network analysis to understand the financial flows between Wagner and the two mining companies we identified: Midas Ressources and Ferrum Mining.

Introduction

Human rights violations have continued to raise concerns regarding the use of private military contractors (PMCs) in Africa, especially groups with known connections to Russia. Political instability and conflicting interests attempting to control valuable natural resources are major contributors to ongoing violence and human rights abuses in the region. The challenges posed by the involvement of private military contractors in committing human rights abuses can be countered by analyzing the network of relationships between mercenary groups, Russia (and its use of PMCs to spread influence), governments in Africa, and other major actors. A network analysis of these major actors was conducted, revealing the motivations and means by which

Russia deploys its affiliated mercenary forces to advance its own interests, and informs our recommendation of further researching whether sanctions against mining companies Midas Ressources and Ferrum Mining may be warranted to reduce financial support for the operations of Russian mercenary forces, specifically Wagner Group (Wagner).

This report includes a high-level overview of our approach to the Mercenaries in Africa project, followed by a discussion of relevant background information including various factors within the macro environment and a business level analysis of the Russian-affiliated Wagner Group. Methodology is examined, followed by a discussion of the findings of our network analysis conducted to identify connections between Russia, private military contractors, and companies primarily operating in the Central African Republic (CAR). The report concludes with a discussion of recommendations informed by our extensive literature review, examination of external factors and the business model of the Wagner Group, and detailed network analysis.

Project Description & Approach

The Mercenaries in Africa project is focused on exposing the activities of private military contractor groups in Africa, which are linked to various human rights violations in the region. This project will focus on mercenary group affiliation with the Russian government. Our project is focused on identifying connections between different groups and individual actors, uncovering various links and relationships between them.

The initial approach to this project included a literature review with a broad scope of research focused on mercenary groups operating on the African continent with potential ties to Russia. The scope of research was narrowed to the Wagner Group after discovering various ties between Wagner and prominent figures associated with the Russian government. The next phase of research focused on identifying nations with major deployments of Wagner personnel, which led to further narrowing scope on the Central African Republic as the Wagner Group has a significant level of operations within the country.

Research continued with a focus on identifying foreign companies associated with the mining industry in the Central African Republic given its profitable natural resources. AXMIN, a Canadian mining company, was identified as a key foreign operator within the Central African Republic mining sector. Further literature review revealed information about the Ndassima Mine, which was previously mined by AXMIN before operations were ceased as the mine fell under rebel control. Additional research identified a recent major proposal in updating the mining code of the Central African Republic, which seeks to establish GEMINCA as the sole broker of mining resources and specifically exempts Russian-affiliated Midas Ressources from these regulations. Extensive literature review and a thorough network analysis reveal corruption and various connections between Russian figures, Wagner Group, Midas Ressources, the government of the Central African Republic, and other major players in the region.

Background Information

Macro Environment Overview: Central African Republic, Civil War, and Wagner Group

The Central African Republic is a landlocked nation of about 5.5 million inhabitants, located in the interior part of Sub-Saharan Africa.¹ Despite its vast natural resources, the country is ranked extremely low on global indices of prosperity and development, ranking 188 out of 189 nations globally on the United Nations Human Development Index.² A large portion of the Central African Republic GDP is comprised of agriculture, while exports of resources such as diamonds, uranium, and gold comprise a smaller share of GDP.³ More than 2 out of 3 residents of the Central African Republic live below the international poverty line on less than \$1.90 USD per day, and the overall literacy rate within CAR is less than 40%.⁴

The Central African Republic has been plagued by political instability and a history of violence since its inception as an independent nation in 1960, when it gained independence from France. The country is in the midst of a civil war, with ongoing conflict taking place between more than a dozen separate rebel groups and official government forces. Government corruption continues to be a major issue within the country, which ranked 146/180 on the global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2020.⁵ Nearly 3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and nearly 600,000 people have been internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict.⁶ Foreign aid is sent to the CAR by developed nations, most notably those in the European Union (EU) with allocated foreign aid from the EU totaling €21.5 million in 2021.

Violence continues to escalate as military contractor firms such as the Russian-affiliated Wagner Group increase their involvement. The Wagner Group has been connected to a wide range of atrocities and human rights abuses in the Central African Republic, including many instances of torture, rape, destruction of property, and the execution-style killing of innocent civilians.⁷ The major external factors acting upon the Central African Republic and their various impacts are analyzed further within the PESTEL Analysis contained in the Appendix A. Additional information about the Wagner Group, including its business model, is depicted in the following sections, along with a detailed network analysis and associated recommendations.

Research Methodology Process

The research methodology process (see Appendix B) begins by selecting a research area and formulating objectives. Then a literature review is needed to collect primary information followed by performing data analysis to reach conclusions. Our consulting team started looking for mercenaries' activities in Africa, where we found a common name, Wagner Group, which is

accused of several human rights abuses including violent harassment, intimidation, rapes and sexual violence against women, men, and young girls in Africa;⁸ also, this group was involved in the death of 3 Russian journalists shooting a documentary on Russian mercenaries in the Central African Republic.⁹

Our research led to ties between Wagner Group and Russia, specifically to Yevgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch known as Putin's "chef" because of a lucrative catering business serving Russia's president.¹⁰ The next step was to find where Wagner Group was deploying its forces. According to various reports, Wagner has 5 levels of cooperation with governments, with five and four as the highest levels. The Central African Republic, Madagascar and Sudan are level 5 while Zimbabwe, Libya and South Africa are level 4.¹¹ Our team performed a background check and found out that the CAR is the second poorest country in the world and has been ravaged by a civil war since 2013.¹²

Russians began working in the CAR between 2017 and 2018 with advisors and companies linked to Prigozhin.¹³ Based on these findings, we decided to focus on CAR and explored its economy and relationships with Russia given the strong Russian influence in the country. General features of CAR indicated that the three main sectors are agriculture, forestry, and mining.¹⁴ According to the Kimberley Process, in 2012, CAR ranked 12th among diamond producers in the world and experts rank its diamond quality as one of the top five around the world.¹⁵ As such, we focused much of our research on this sector.

Our next objective was to find US based companies operating in CAR within the mining industry. However, every company that held exploration concessions in CAR suspended their activities but AXMIN, a Canadian gold exploration company with projects in this country.¹⁶ AXMIN had permissions to operate its Passendro Gold Project including a license for 25 years, but the Company's operations at Ndassima mine represented a huge risk given the rich resources found there. In 2013, AXMIN received confirmation reports that its facilities, equipment, tools, and vehicles were stolen by rebels and as a result, operations in CAR were suspended.¹⁷

Ndassima mine is one of the richest and most exploitable in the CAR. AXMIN attempted to resume operations after rebels had been cleared out by CAR and Wagner forces, though the CAR government decided to withdraw permits from AXMIN for "not meeting legal deadlines to start operations".¹⁸ AXMIN has attempted to appeal this withdrawal of permits, but attempts to date have been fruitless as the CAR handed rights to mine and explore Ndassima to Midas Ressources, a Russian-linked company we will cover later in this report.

From there, our research led us to the draft mining code proposed by the CAR which created a private broker called GEMINCA which would be the only legal entity mining companies could sell their gems and minerals to both domestically and globally. We found that Midas Ressources

was the only exception⁴⁰, and we decided to investigate further. Then, following Wagner activity in the mining industry, we identified another Malagasy-Russian connection: Ferrum Mining.²⁰

Business Model Canvas

We analyzed the Wagner Group business model using a Business Model Canvas (Appendix C), a strategic management tool that helps to visualize and assess several organization components by working on 9 building blocks or boxes with internal and external factors. The left side of the model has its focal point on the business (internal factors) and the right side on the customer or the market (external factors), both sides meet around the value proposition, which represents a value exchange between the business and customers.

The business model canvas provides a quick overview of the Wagner Group and clarifies how different aspects of this entity are related to each other. The first component is key partners. Wagner mercenaries arrived in Africa in 2017 to provide support to Libya.²¹ Since then, it has been expanding operations across the continent. In every country it trains local forces, partnering with Central African, Libyan, Sudanese, Malagasy, and Syrian Armies. In addition, Wagner Group has been described as a proxy force for the Russian Ministry of Defense. It shares a military base with the Russian Army Force; a facility that was built between 2015 and 2016 encompassing approximately 6 acres.²²

The next internal block focuses on Wagner Group's main activities required to deliver its value proposition. Wagner provides a range of services including targeting intelligence and training African forces due to extensive experience of its members on military operations. Also, logistical support and infrastructure protection are included, for instance the Central African Republic recovered Ndassima mine from rebels by using Wagner resources.²³ Wagner Group's critical resources are personnel, training facility, access to infrastructure and lucrative contracts. Starting with personnel, according to press reports, it has from 3,600 to 5,000 mercenaries (most of them are Russian citizens) who have impressive military backgrounds.²⁴ Its training facility is located in Molmino, Russia where the GRU (Russian Chief Intelligence Office) also operates. GRU soldiers guard a road leading to the Wagner's station, suggesting a relationship between the entities.²⁵ Moreover, there is documentation stating that Wagner operatives used Russia's Ministry of Defense infrastructure (i.e., aircrafts to Venezuela and Libya, military hospitals to treat and rehabilitate survivors at Deir ez-Zor, Syria), and GRU issued passports which are only issued by the Central Migration Office Unit 770-001 to people linked to Russia's Ministry of Defense.²⁶

Wagner's external factors start with its customer relationships. The group offers dedicated onsite assistance, which represents the most intimate and deepest relationship with costumers. Wagner deploys forces at strategic locations in countries demanding its services to provide customized recommendations and expertise including 24/7 customer support. When assessing its customer segments, Wagner is actively participating in several divisions to better serve its clients' needs. Specifically, some of them are paramilitary where members train and assist host-nation security forces; combat, here specialists elaborate key tactical capabilities for specialized tasks; and protective service, where Wagner serves as presidential guards or secures key infrastructures

(mines, mineral extraction sites). Wagner delivers its value through different channels including field sales and word of mouth; direct communications are established with local governments to assess their situation and establish a game plan. Eventually, those operations achieve their goals and success stories are spread rapidly to other countries.

Both internal and external factors are tied to Wagner's value proposition, which is providing highly qualified personnel trained to deliver military intelligence support and infrastructure protection to mainly African countries as well as assisting governments with successful counter-offensive against rebels.

The last two blocks of the canvas relate to financials: cost structure and revenue streams. Wagner's main expenses are salaries, transportation, military equipment, and death benefits. According to a BBC Russian investigation, officers fighting in Syria were earning up to \$4,300; \$6,000 a month and \$1,380 for service in Russia.²⁷ Transportation costs are representative including mercenaries' accommodation (\$2,600), equipment per contractor (\$1,000) and daily feed for each mercenary (\$12). Finally, mercenaries' relatives are paid a considerable compensation in case of deaths.

In terms of revenue streams, Wagner receives funding from lucrative defense contracts collected by Prigozhin and private security contracts in Africa where the organization is paid with gold, diamonds, and natural resources such as gas and oil in exchange for its services.²⁸ This analysis helps to identify roadmaps with an agile methodology and highlight several areas of focus.

Network Analysis of Wagner Group and Their Involvement in the Central African Republic

Overview

Our consulting team performed a social network analysis to identify connections and linkages of actors. In order to do that, a broad approach was taken. In an effort to capture a holistic view of actors involved in mercenaries' activities, we utilized a wide variety of sources, including documents prepared by human rights organizations, US and UN reports, company websites, and news sources from a variety of countries

The primary focus of the analysis was to identify and map connections between the Wagner Group and its periphery of links within and connected to the Central African Republic. We were ultimately attempting to find connections between Wagner Group and US entities, though this search was met with many dead ends. As previously noted, our team identified the CAR mining sector as a starting point given the rich deposits of minerals and gems which are exploited by Russian interests. We found that Russian interests related to Wagner are linked to several companies providing services to the CAR government and investing in the mining industry (as shown in the Appendix F).

Due to active interventions of the Wagner Group in the CAR and its connections to one of the most prominent industries in Africa, we focused our network analysis on this topic which spread beyond the borders of the CAR.

Explanation Of Analysis

The Social Network Analysis (SNA) seeks to manage the connections between entities through investigating and understanding behaviors and relationships.²⁹ SNA generates data that can be viewed as a social relational system characterized by a set of actors and their social ties.³⁰ Several models have been identified to perform SNA including matrices, formal, graphs, and statistical methods; these models involve the use of points or “nodes” connected by lines or “edges” to better represent social relations. Studies using SNA have been undertaken in different areas such as social mobility, class structure, perceptions of class, corporate power, international trade exchanges, welfare support, migration patterns, and tracing terrorist networks.³¹ In consideration of the reviewed literature, we opted for a nominalist approach which is more efficient to study clandestine networks (Wagner Group) and is based on a theoretical focus of the researchers.

In order to execute a network analysis, we utilized Gephi, a free visualization tool for exploring, understanding graphs and discovering patterns. Its application extends not only to SNA but also to exploratory data, link, biological network analysis and poster creation.

Process Definition

The network analysis was performed by first establishing a set of nodes, actors tied with other members, that were identified during our background check including people, companies, industries, and countries (Appendix D). These nodes are interconnected by edges (Appendix E) which represent a relationship between two nodes. For instance, within our network graph, an edge connects Ndassima Mine (gold mine) located in the CAR to Wagner Group, Midas Ressources, AXMIN and the CAR government; this ownership constitutes an edge that could be either directed or undirected. A directed link is often depicted with an arrow implying that relationships go from one actor to other; an undirected edge shows a reciprocal relation. For our network, we included undirected interactions between all the players.

Wagner Group

As previously noted, the Wagner Group is a Russian paramilitary group operating throughout the world and known to commit human rights abuses.³⁸ The Wagner Group’s influence in Africa is not limited to the CAR, rather, they are known to have activity in Libya, South Sudan, Madagascar, Mozambique, and most recently entering Mali. Further, it is believed that Wagner has offices or presence in at least 20 African nations, including those listed and Eswatini, Lesotho, and Botswana.

The network analysis focuses mainly on the CAR, though there are important links pertaining to Madagascar that are also highlighted (see Appendix F). Wagner has been accused of war crimes in the CAR⁴², including unlawful detention⁵³, rape, sexual violence, and execution style killings of villagers, miners, and three Russian Journalists investigating their activities in the CAR.^{37, 50} The figure below is a snapshot of the network analysis with nodes that link to Wagner Group.



It is firstly important to understand Wagner’s ties to Russia. As previously noted, they are utilized to spread Russian influence without official State presence. Wagner’s supposed founder and Chief Operating Officer, Dmitri Outkin, has known ties to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian Oligarch and close friend of Vladimir Putin. The connection is relayed through the Concord Group, a holding company owned by Prigozhin with dozens of smaller companies within the Concord network. Outkin was the former director of the Concord Group.⁴⁶

Further links to Concord stem from other active and shell companies tied to Wagner, including Sewa Security, a brokerage known for setting up Wagner contracts, and M Finans and Lobaye Invest, two companies tied to investing in the mining sector in both the CAR and South Sudan, who also have links to Prigozhin’s Concord Group.⁴⁶ Note, both Lobaye Invest and M Finans were sanctioned by the US ties to Prigozhin who made the FBI’s most wanted list for his role in influencing the 2016 United States presidential election. The ties between Prigozhin, Outkin, and the Concord Group are further detailed in Appendix F.

Wagner’s ties to the CAR government are relatively explicit, as members of the militant group were sent to the CAR to train government forces, act as security to government officials, and

provide intelligence services. Their fighters, alongside government forces, have fought rebel groups in the CAR, including the UPC, and were integral in taking back control of Ndassima mine (to be discussed further). Further, as of December 1, 2021, it was reported that essentially all CAR forces were under command or supervision of Wagner.⁴³

Wagner is also tied to Russian Officials with close links to CAR president Faustin-Archange Touadera through his advisor Valery Zakharov who has a past working relationship with Yevgeny Khodotov, director of both M Finans and Lobaye Invest.⁴⁶ Taken together, we found Wagner to be tied to the Russian Oligarch, Prigozhin, which is consistent with reporting by various media sources. We also found Wagner was tied closely with the CAR's military as the group has effectively been training and leading local forces. Further, Wagner has peripheral ties to mining companies which are suspected to be revenue streams for the group, and the analysis below will further lay out Wagner's ties to the mining sector within the CAR and related financial interests.

Draft New Mining Code

General industry, most notably the mining industry, in the CAR contributes to approximately 20% of the Country's GDP. Additionally, the CAR exports approximately \$2 million in diamonds to the United States each year, per US Trade Representative data, though as much as 30-90% of diamonds (reports vary) and nearly 95% of gold in the CAR cross its borders undetected and unreported.¹³ Gem dealers in the CAR have admitted to illegally selling diamonds to buyers in Belgium, Brazil, France, China, Israel, Lebanon, and to other African Nations.⁵⁷ To combat these unreported/illegal exports and take control of the industry, the CAR government proposed new mining legislation in October of 2021 to form a private brokerage entity known as GEMINCA⁴⁰, a French acronym that effectively translates to "Gems and Minerals of the Central African Republic". Note, GEMINCA will replace the present state-run broker COMIGEM which translates to "Minerals and Gems Counter". COMIGEM has been unable to compete with private buying offices which account for 93.75% of state sales.⁵⁶

GEMINCA is to serve as the broker for all gem/precious metal sales, effectively forcing all mining companies in the CAR to sell their products to GEMINCA for export (vs. the present code which encourages miners to form cooperatives without requirement to use COMIGEM).⁵⁶ Furthermore, any local sales within the CAR must be made through GEMINCA brokers, meaning mining companies are no longer able to sell directly to end users within the CAR.³⁴ While GEMINCA's primary shareholder will be the government of the CAR, the draft code allows for other shareholders, and this provision is suspected as a way for Russian actors related to Wagner to recoup losses from the costs of operating in the CAR.⁴⁰ Given the code is still in a draft stage, little is known.

Notably, article 154 of the draft mining code states “in order to effectively carry out the State policy in the field of the circulation of precious and semi-precious stones and metals, the company GEMINCA may at its discretion, appeal to any security service.” This opens the door for GEMINCA to award contracts to Wagner Group to secure mining sites within the CAR. One exception in the new draft mining code exists for an entity known as Midas Ressources, a Malagasy-owned company with strong ties to Russia and a strongly suspected link to Wagner Group (further discussed below).³⁴

While the draft mining code was presented to the CAR congressional floor as a way to curb illegal diamond trading, the proposed changes to the CAR’s mining code open doors for Wagner to recoup its costs in the CAR by allowing Midas Ressources to capture huge gains through its ability to circumvent GEMINCA for export sales and take contracts with GEMINCA to secure mining sites.³⁴ Further, should the non-government shareholders of GEMINCA be Russian interests with ties to Wagner, all gems and minerals leaving the country would effectively be financially beneficial to the Wagner Group.

Ndassima Mine

During our research, only one foreign (non-Russian related) company was found to be operating in the CAR, a Chinese-owned, Canadian-listed company known as AXMIN which has permits to mine and explore Ndassima mine under their Passendro gold project. Ndassima is one of the most rich and profitable mines in the CAR with gold, diamonds, and other minerals present there. AXMIN had active operations from 2006-2012 at Ndassima. In 2012, rebel groups within the CAR captured Ndassima, forcing AXMIN to withdraw its operations, though its permits to mine and explore remained intact. In 2019, the CAR armed forces (FACA), with the help of Wagner, retook the Ndassima mine.⁵⁵

Upon clearing of the rebels, AXMIN attempted to resume its operations at Ndassima, though the CAR government claimed AXMIN had broken their contracts. AXMIN claims their permits were revoked due to Russian meddling¹⁸, and AXMIN is still legally appealing to regain control of the site, though no significant progress had been made at the time of our research.⁴¹

Currently, Ndassima Mine is under the protection of Wagner Group³³ with Midas Ressources (discussed below) being the primary operator.

Midas Ressources

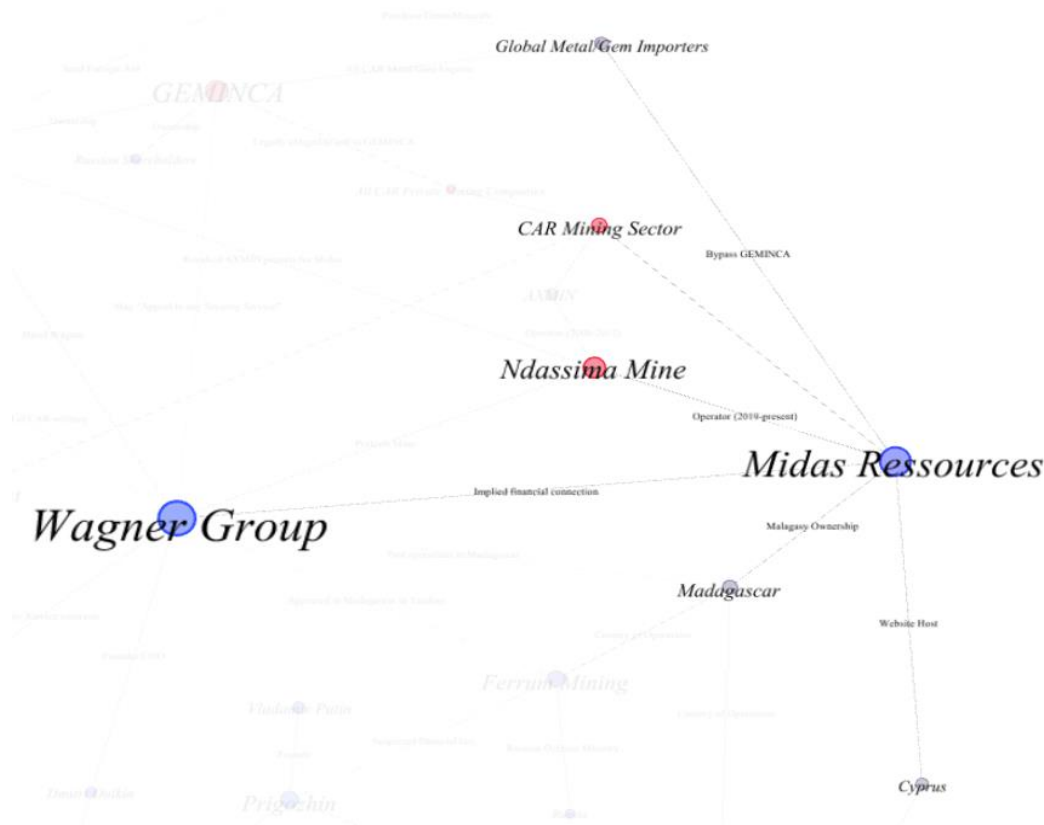
Midas Ressources (Midas) is a Malagasy-owned mining company with headquarters and operations in the CAR. Per their website, the Company specializes in diamonds, gold, cuprum, and chrome. Midas Ressources is strongly believed to have Russian connections, specifically

with the Wagner Group and those involved. With the proposed change to the mining code (as noted above) Midas Ressources will bypass GEMINCA to export gems and metals globally.^{34,40}

Midas primarily works out of the Ndassima mine and has been the operator since 2019¹⁹, when Wagner and the FACA retook the mine from rebel forces. Wagner has had a strong presence in the region surrounding Ndassima mine since and provides security services at the site (see Appendix G).

Little is known of Midas' Malagasy ownership, though a CNN report noted the Company was a Russian entity.³⁶ It is important to note, Russia and Wagner Group both have strong ties to the Malagasy government, as Wagner forces are deployed there and Russian actors influenced and oversaw the election⁴⁸, including Prigozhin who has strong financial ties in the country.⁴⁷

In addition to its connections to Madagascar, Midas Ressources' website has an IP address out of Cyprus where Prigozhin's shell companies (under the Concord Group) are known to have ties. Prigozhin sold his shares of Concord Ventures to a Cyprus-based company known as Renitavo Investment Ltd, tying Prigozhin closer to the island-nation.⁴⁴ These connections are outlined in Appendix F, and the network connections specific to Midas are shown below.



In addition to Midas, Wagner is suspected to be linked to a Russian-owned company known as Ferrum Mining. Ferrum Mining operates in Madagascar and appeared in the country at the same time as Wagner.³² Ferrum is also believed to have contracts with the Russian Defense Ministry to provide chromium, and ownership of the company is suspected to be tied to Russian actors with ties to Wagner, specifically Prigozhin.⁴⁸ True ownership of Ferrum mining is suspect given its size of operations compared to official documentation stating the Company only has one employee on payroll in an office in St. Petersburg.³⁹

Midas Ressources ownership and origin are shrouded with limited information available, though the Company's ability to bypass GEMINCA and strongly suspected ties to Wagner⁴⁰ and related Russian actors are strong signals that further resources should be invested in researching the Company and other mining companies with potential links to Wagner, including Ferrum Mining. No information could be found about Midas Ressources' financial statements, specific mining contracts, or sales. The website is very basic and is a similar format to the website for Ferrum Mining.

Yevgeny Prigozhin

As previously noted, Yevgeny Prigozhin, known as "Putin's chef," is a Russian Oligarch close to Putin. Prigozhin is wanted by the FBI given his ties to Russian troll farms that worked to influence the outcome of the 2016 United States election. In addition to his close relationship with Putin and involvement in influencing US politics, Prigozhin is the founder of the Concord Group which has ownership of a host of shell companies, including the previously mentioned Concord Ventures whose shares are owned by the Cyprus-based company Renitavo Investment Ltd.

Prigozhin's ties to Wagner have been long suspected (and are partially detailed in Appendix H), though he has denied any ties to Wagner.³⁶ We previously noted a between Wagner and Prigozhin lies with Dmitri Outkin, the founder, and Chief Operating Officer of Wagner Group.⁴⁶ Outkin was previously the director of Concord Group in which Prigozhin's financial interests are tied. Concord group is also linked to M Finans, a finance company involved in the mining sector of the CAR along with Lobaye Invest, both of which are tied to Sewa Security through shared ownership Sewa Security is a contract company and broker for Wagner.⁴⁶ As previously noted, both M Finans and Lobaye Invest have been sanctioned by the United States given their ties to Prigozhin and his interests.⁵²

Prigozhin is known to have a global interest in spreading Russian influence and continuing his path to wealth. While there is strong evidence of his involvement in Madagascar, his influence spreads across much of the globe and is heavily focused in Africa.^{44,47} His pathways to the CAR

government and Malagasy Government are not direct but following his shell companies and their related actors is an effective way to trace his interests.

When extending the network analysis beyond the direct sphere of Prigozhin, we found both M Finans and Lobaye Invest are directed by Yevgeny Khodotov who is close with Valery Zakharov⁴⁶, an adviser to CAR president Faustin-Archange Touadera, who oversaw the proposal for GEMINCA through the draft mining code which aimed to benefit Russian paramilitary interests in the country.⁴⁰ Whether Prigozhin will be direct investor in GEMINCA is unknown, though the mining code does not specify who the shareholders of GEMINCA might be.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The network analysis shows strong and suspected connections between the Russian paramilitary group Wagner, Russian oligarch Prigozhin, and Russian financial interests in the mining sector of the CAR. The ties between Wagner and the CAR are also very strong and they continue to have a significant presence in the nation. Per the CAR draft mining code, all metals and gems must go through GEMINCA or GEMINCA-approved brokers whose financial gains will benefit unknown shareholders which are presumed to be Russian. GEMINCA may also tie itself to Wagner to provide protection in CAR mines and transport routes, among other services. Bypassing GEMINCA is only allowed by the Russian-tied business Midas Ressources who has strong suspected ties to Wagner Group, including their activity at Ndassima Mine.

As such, our conclusion suggests that any and all legal/reported exports of metals or gems out of the CAR may directly benefit Russian interests tied to the Wagner Group, a paramilitary organization known to commit human rights abuses. This is contingent upon passing the draft mining code in its current form as GEMINCA will have private shareholders and may hire and pay Wagner for services. Finally, it is important to note that the Wagner Group and Russian interests are so heavily involved in the CAR that one CAR journalist investigating Russian/Wagner influences went so far as to claim the country was becoming a vassal of Russia.⁴³

Recommendations

Based on our findings in the network analysis above, we have determined that the following actions could be taken to better understand the involvement in key players in the network and how they may link to US entities.

Utilize government resources to track gem/gold imports from CAR to United States

Our research shows that if the draft mining code passes, all precious metals/gems leaving the country legally will go through GEMINCA or Midas Ressources, both with financial ties to Wagner. Note, we could not find any information on specific businesses in the US that imported precious metals and stones from the CAR, though 2019 data per the US Trade Representative shows that there were \$2 million in imports from the CAR⁵⁴.

Obtain a copy of the CAR's draft mining code for more information on GEMINCA and its potential shareholders. Also, review a final copy should the draft pass.

Understanding all provisions of the mining code will provide a clearer understanding of the Russian interests related to GEMINCA and whether or not there are strong ties to Wagner. Some local news outlets suggest there may be a tie.

Further investigate Midas Ressources and its buyers

Very little could be found on the web about Midas Ressources, let alone its supply chain/buyers. The company is strongly suspected to be linked to Wagner and other Russian interests with the CAR's draft mining code directly benefiting the Company's operations.

Further investigate links between Ferrum Mining and Wagner Group

While we found some evidence of ties between the two, Ferrum mining's ownership and size of operations are contradicted in various reports, and it is suspected the company is tied to Prigozhin and other Russian interests with ties to Wagner Group.

Identify whether the links between Midas Ressources/Ferrum Mining and Wagner Group are strong enough to warrant sanctions against the companies.

Sanctions against M Finans and Lobaye Invest were taken because of their connections with Prigozhin. We recommend investigating for more proof of connections between Wagner and Midas Ressources and/or Ferrum mining.

Appendix

A. PESTEL Analysis

Overview of Background Research and Macro Environment

PESTEL Analysis provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing each element of the external environment (see Table 2 for a summary of factors). This analysis includes the various Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological, Environmental, and Legal factors at play in the Central African Republic. Table 2 discusses the trends at each factor level and Table 3 summarizes those that are likely to have the biggest impact.

Table 1. PESTEL Factor Definition

Political: Government actions, government stability, policy changes, trade restrictions, historical events, etc.

Economic: Economic growth, inflation, exchange rates, unemployment rates, income, industry sectors, etc.

Sociocultural: Social factors, cultural attitudes, societal norms, values, etc.

Technological: Technological innovations, accessibility of technology, degree of automation, research, and development, etc.

Environmental: Natural resources, environmental policies, climate factors, etc.

Legal: New laws, legal mandates, regulations, etc.

Country PESTEL - Central African Republic

Table 1. PESTEL Analysis of CAR

TRENDS	
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ History of violence and government instability (World Bank, 2021) ▪ Civil War – ongoing conflict between Government and 14 separate rebel groups (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021) ▪ Anti-French sentiment following independence from France in 1960 (BBC, 2018) ▪ 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) Ranking: 146/180. 2020 CPI Score: 26/100. (Transparency International, 2021) ▪ UN Peacekeeping forces intervening in country (BBC, 2018) ▪ Russian Wagner Group intervening in Civil War, violently harassing civilians, peacekeepers (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2021)
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture generates 50% of GDP and employs 80% of rural citizens (IFAD, 2021) ▪ Exports include diamonds, uranium, gold, and oil (USGS, 2010) ▪ Mining companies such as AXMIN becoming involved in mining and exporting natural resources (Axadle Times, 2021) ▪ CAR is rich in natural resources, yet mining accounts for only 3% of GDP as recently as 2016 (USAID, 2021) ▪ Despite abundance of natural resources, more than 2/3 of CAR population lives in poverty (USAID, 2021)
Sociocultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human rights violations inflicted on citizens, 2.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 581,000+ internally displaced persons (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021) ▪ Approximately 71% of national population lives below international poverty line, less than \$1.90 per day PPP (World Bank, 2021) ▪ Average household size of 4.9 people, average number of 3.3 children (UN Digital Library, 2017) ▪ CAR has less than 38% adult literacy rate nationwide (World Bank, 2021)

TRENDS

Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low levels of technology and lack of infrastructure development throughout the country (USAID, 2021) ▪ 4% of total CAR population nationwide use the internet (World Bank, 2021)
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAR is rich in various natural resources including gold, diamonds, uranium, and oil (UC Irvine, 2020) ▪ CAR has many mineral resources including copper, diamonds, gold, uranium, iron ore, graphite, tin, and quartz, while only diamonds and gold were largely being developed as of 2020 (USAID, 2021) ▪ Negative environmental impacts often accompany mining efforts – in western CAR, nearly 80% of mining sites altered the color or smell of local water supply, and nearly all sites contributed to deforestation (USAID, 2019) ▪ Desertification, deforestation, and poaching are all manmade environmental issues occurring in CAR (UC Irvine, 2020)
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes in CAR mining code have conferred broad powers on state-owned GEMINCA corporation, with Russian-affiliated Midas Ressources exempted from regulations (Mondafrique, 2021) ▪ CAR has been a member state of the Kimberley Process since 2003, member of artisanal and alluvial diamond working group since 2006 (Kimberley Process, 2021) ▪ While technically a semi-presidential republic, CAR government and elections are plagued by corruption and fraud (Freedom House, 2021) ▪ Estimated more than 80% of diamond production is currently smuggled out of CAR (Mondafrique, 2021)

PEST(EL) Analysis Key Factors & Highlights

Table 2. PESTEL Key Findings

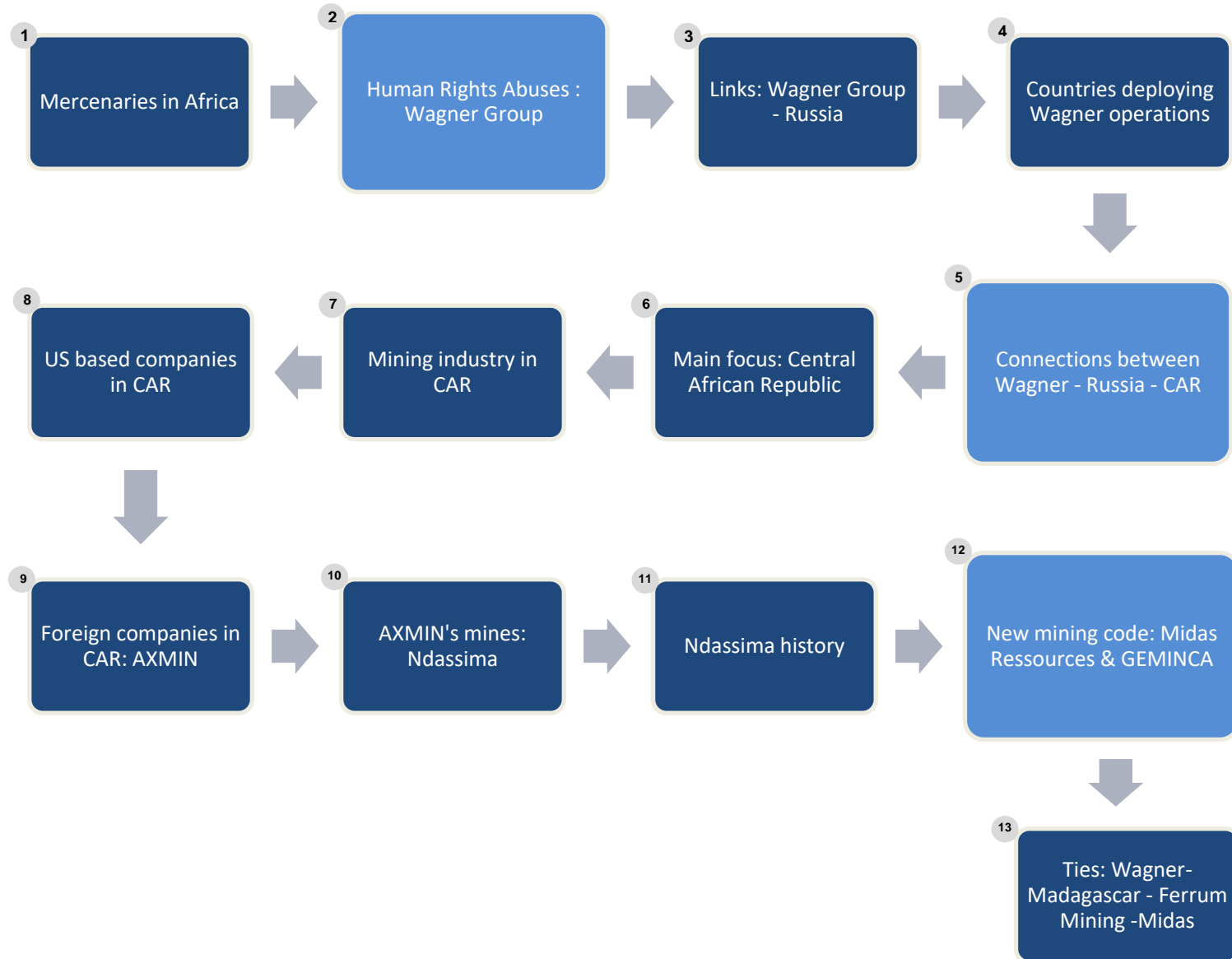
Macro-Environmental Factor	Trend & Projected Change: Opportunity/Threat	Impact Of Change & Probability of Occurrence	Level of Importance
Political: Russian-Connected Wagner Group operating in CAR, intervening in Civil War	Foreign mercenary group Wagner is expanding Russian influence in CAR	Wagner deployments in CAR are likely to continue and have a strong impact on human rights violations and armed conflicts between CAR government and rebel militia groups	High
Economic: Despite abundance of natural resources, more than 2/3 of CAR's population lives in poverty	CAR continues to experience poor economic conditions with high inequality and extreme poverty	Economic challenges are likely to continue	Moderate
Sociocultural: Human rights violations inflicted upon CAR citizens, millions of citizens in need of humanitarian assistance and/or internally displaced	Human rights violations and war crimes continue to occur in CAR	Citizens of the Central African Republic are likely to continue being impacted by war crimes and human rights violations committed by Wagner and other actors	High
Technological: Low levels of technology and lack of infrastructure development throughout the country	Under current unstable conditions, CAR is likely to continue to experience a lack of technological advancement and limited infrastructure development	Quality of life for CAR citizens is negatively impacted by lack of access to technology and lack of developed infrastructure	Moderate

Macro-Environmental Factor	Trend & Projected Change: Opportunity/Threat	Impact Of Change & Probability of Occurrence	Level of Importance
Environmental: CAR is rich in many natural resources, including diamonds, gold, uranium, and oil	Abundance of natural resources in the environment provides a source of mining-related conflict	Conflict related to mining of precious materials, including diamonds and gold, is likely to continue to significantly impact CAR	Moderate
Legal: Recent changes in CAR mining code have conferred broad powers on state-owned GEMINCA corporation, with Russian-affiliated Midas Ressources exempted from regulations	Russian-affiliated Midas Ressources will grow its business and generate greater wealth	Midas Ressources is likely to funnel mining profits to Wagner Group, increasing its influence	High

Table 3. PESTEL Implications

Implications of PESTEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corruption, poor economic conditions, political instability, and human rights violations are likely to continue. ▪ Deployments of Russian-affiliated Wagner Group personnel are likely to have a significant impact on human rights violations and continued conflicts between CAR government and rebel militia groups. ▪ Recent changes in CAR mining code, which conferred broad powers on state-owned GEMINCA corporation and exempted Russian-affiliated Midas Ressources from regulations, are likely to financially benefit Wagner Group and ultimately increase its presence in CAR.

B. Research Methodology



C. Business Model Canvas

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Proposition	Customer Relationships	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Russian Ministry of Defense ▪ Armed Forces: CAR, Madagascar, Syria, Libya, Sudan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Targeting Intelligence ▪ Training of local forces ▪ Infrastructure Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly qualified personnel trained to provide military intelligence support and infrastructure protection to African countries. ▪ Assist governments with successful counter-offensive against rebels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated onsite assistance ▪ 24/7 Customer support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paramilitary ▪ Combat ▪ Protective service
	<p style="text-align: center;">Key Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personnel ▪ Training facility ▪ Russia’s Ministry of Defense infrastructure 		<p style="text-align: center;">Channels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field Sales ▪ Word of Mouth 	
Cost Structure		Revenue Streams		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salaries ▪ Transportation ▪ Military Equipment ▪ Death Benefits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Russian government contracts ▪ Private security contracts in Africa <u>Foreign Sources:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Golds and Diamonds ○ Natural Resources (oil and gas) 		

D. Network Analysis Nodes

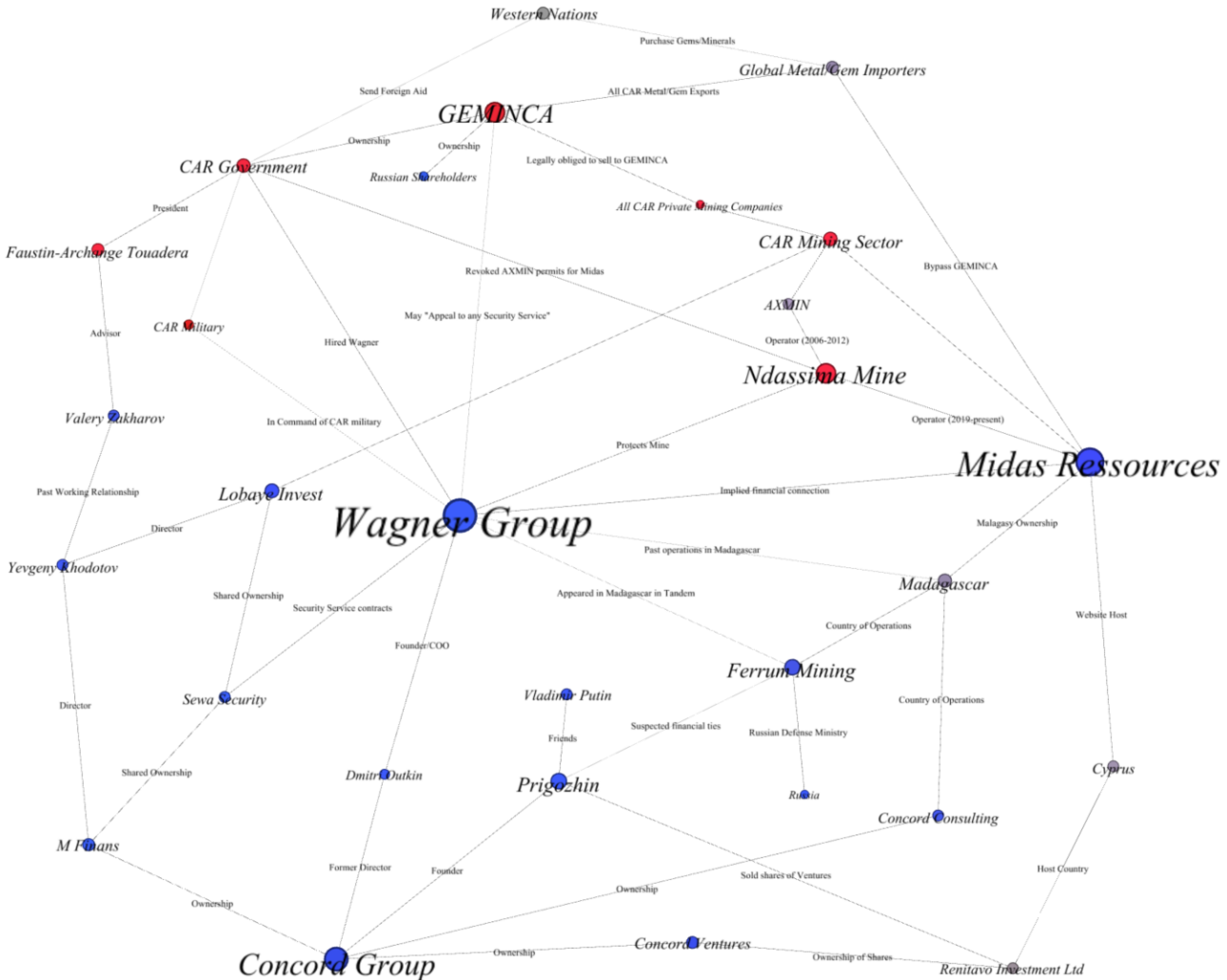
ID	Label
0	Midas Ressources
2	GEMINCA
3	Russian Shareholders
4	All CAR Private Mining Companies
5	CAR Mining Sector
6	Ndassima Mine
7	AXMIN
10	CAR Government
11	Global Metal/Gem Importers
12	Cyprus
13	Renitavo Investment Ltd
14	Concord Ventures
15	Concord Group
16	Concord Consulting
17	Prigozhin
18	Vladimir Putin
19	Dmitri Outkin
20	Wagner Group
21	M Finans
22	Sewa Security
23	Lobaye Invest
24	Yevgeny Khodotov
25	Valery Zakharov
26	Faustin-Archange Touadera
27	Madagascar
28	Ferrum Mining
30	Russia
31	Western Nations
33	CAR Military

E. Network Analysis Edges

F. Source	Target	Type	ID	Label
0	11	Undirected	0	Bypass GEMINCA
0	5	Undirected	1	Participant in Sector
0	6	Undirected	2	Operator (2019-present)
0	12	Undirected	3	Website Host
0	20	Undirected	4	Implied financial connection
4	2	Undirected	33	Legally obliged to sell to GEMINCA
13	17	Undirected	34	Sold shares of Ventures
2	3	Undirected	7	Ownership
5	4	Undirected	8	Participant in sector
5	7	Undirected	9	Participant in sector
6	7	Undirected	10	Operator (2006-2012)
6	20	Undirected	11	Protects Mine
23	5	Undirected	12	Diamond investment company
23	22	Undirected	13	Shared Ownership
20	22	Undirected	14	Security Service contracts
20	19	Undirected	15	Founder/COO
15	19	Undirected	16	Former Director
15	14	Undirected	17	Ownership
15	16	Undirected	18	Ownership
15	21	Undirected	19	Ownership
22	21	Undirected	20	Shared Ownership
15	17	Undirected	21	Founder
18	17	Undirected	22	Friends
2	10	Undirected	23	Ownership
20	10	Undirected	24	Hired Wagner
26	10	Undirected	25	President
26	25	Undirected	26	Advisor
24	25	Undirected	27	Past Working Relationship
24	21	Undirected	28	Director
14	13	Undirected	29	Ownership of Shares
12	13	Undirected	30	Host Country
2	11	Undirected	31	All CAR Metal/Gem Exports
23	24	Undirected	32	Director
27	0	Undirected	35	Malagasy Ownership
27	28	Undirected	36	Country of Operations
30	28	Undirected	37	Russian Defense Ministry

27	28	Undirected	38	Country of Operations
2	20	Undirected	47	May "Appeal to any Security Service"
16	27	Undirected	40	Country of Operations
10	6	Undirected	41	Revoked AXMIN permits for Midas
31	10	Undirected	42	Send Foreign Aid
11	31	Undirected	43	Purchase Gems/Minerals
20	27	Undirected	44	Past operations in Madagascar
17	28	Undirected	45	Suspected financial ties
20	28	Undirected	46	Appeared in Madagascar in Tandem
33	10	Undirected	48	Military of CAR
33	20	Undirected	49	In Command of CAR military

F. Network Analysis (Full)



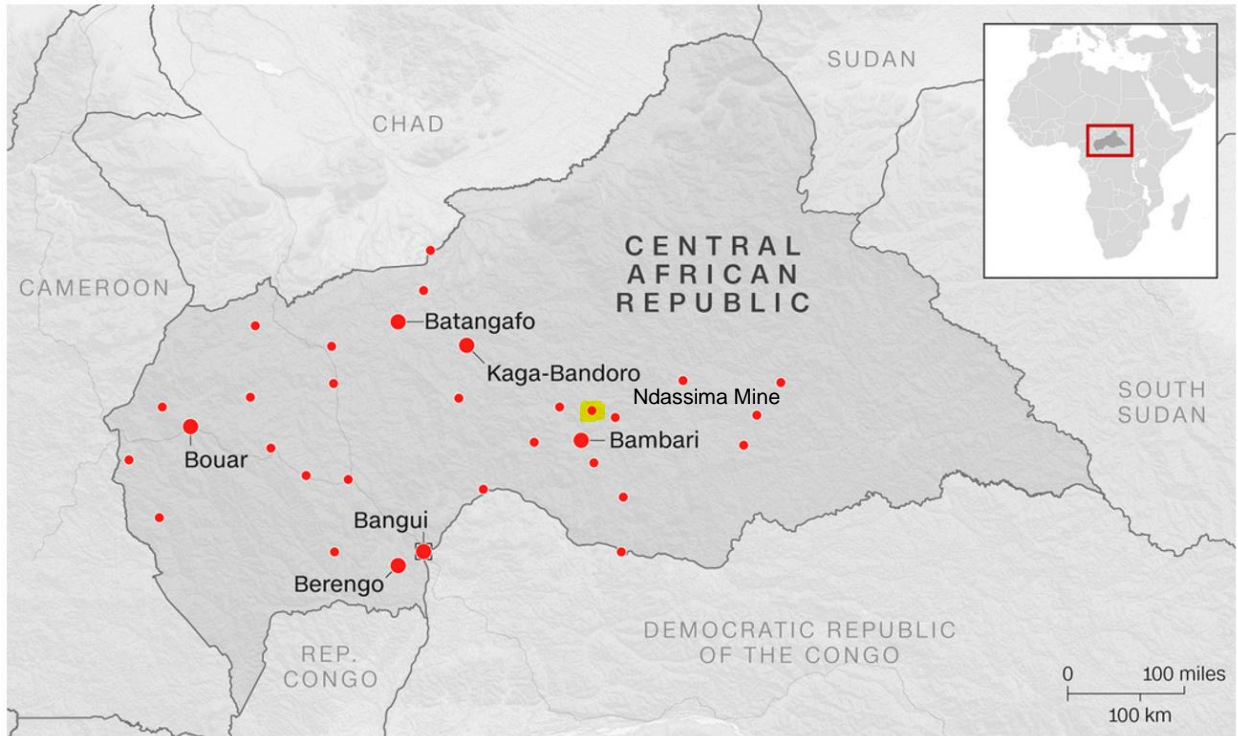
Red nodes signify CAR individuals and entities, blue nodes signify Russian individuals and entities, and grey nodes are other non-Russian/non-CAR entities and countries.

G. Map of Wagner Locations

The widespread presence of Russian mercenaries

There are nearly 2,300 Russian mercenaries at more than 30 bases around the Central African Republic, according to estimates by the United Nations.

- Locations with 10-80 Russian mercenaries
- Bases estimated to have 100 or more mercenaries



CNN Source: United Nations (data as of mid-June), Maps4news/©HERE
Graphic: Henrik Pettersson, CNN

H. Map of Wagner Deployments

WAGNER DEPLOYMENT

Where do Wagner deployment, Russian political interests, Russian economic interests and Prigozhin's commercial interests intersect?



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