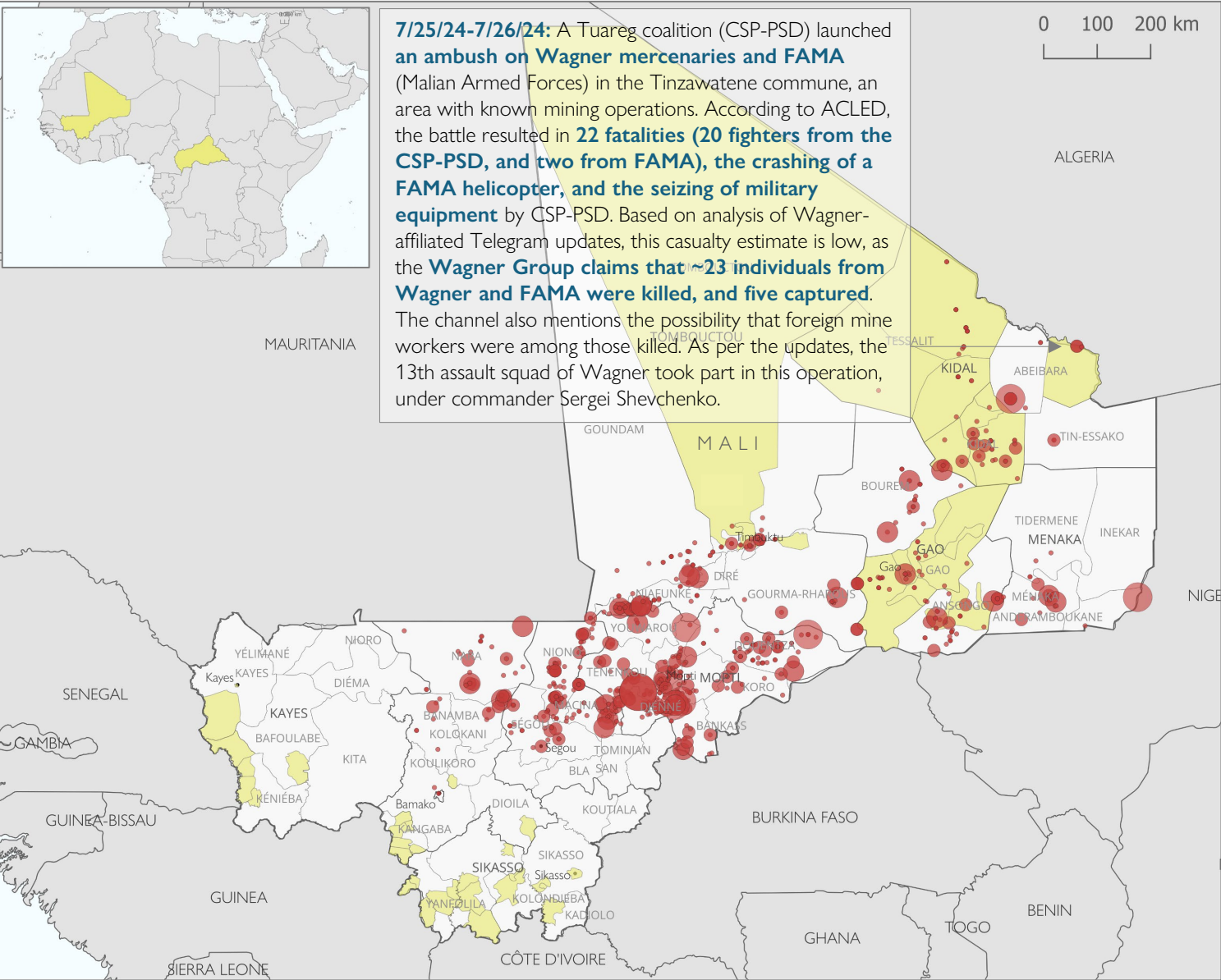


Background: The Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, has become increasingly involved in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali, as part of Russia’s broader strategy to increase influence in Africa by providing security assistance in exchange for resource access. As both nations face political and economic instability, with tensions surrounding unregulated gold mining, the Wagner Group has strategically positioned itself as a key player. By mapping conflict events and mining locations, this research reveals the Wagner Group's dual role in supporting government forces and targeting valuable resources, underscoring the potential geopolitical and economic motivations driving their actions in these countries – and highlighting the need for further investigation into Wagner’s connections to mining operations.

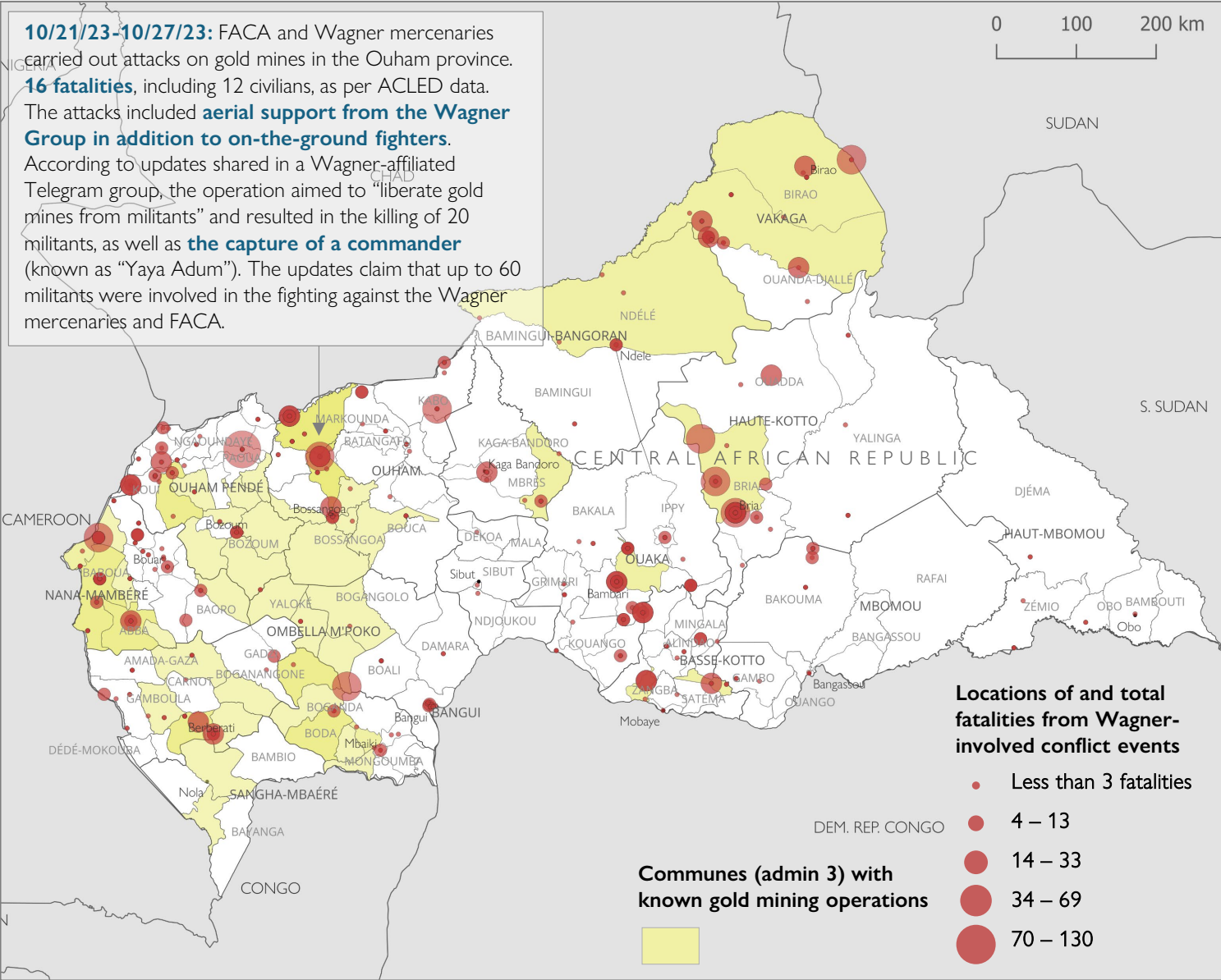


Total Wagner-involved conflict events by quarter from 2019 to July 2024, and timeline of key political events in Mali and CAR



Sources: ACLED, UNODC, NGA, IPIS, OFAC, Global Initiative, U.S. Dept. of State

Methodology and limitations: This research analyzed the Wagner Group's involvement in gold mining in Mali and CAR using conflict event data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) dataset. Events involving Wagner forces were tagged, focusing on raids, attacks, and battles which took place at gold mines. Additional data sources helped create a QGIS layer mapping areas with known gold mining operations, which was then spatially joined with ACLED events to identify overlaps. Two specific multi-day battles were analyzed in detail, using insights from ACLED and a Wagner-affiliated Telegram group. The study faced limitations in data timeliness and availability, and analyst expertise. The analysis of social media data was limited to a single Telegram group, restricting the breadth of qualitative insights.



Percent of conflict events located in gold mining communes per year in CAR and Mali

Year	CAR	MALI
2019	50%	No data
2020	17%	No data
2021	46%	0%
2022	63%	9%
2023	60%	19%
2024*	53%	28%
% of total events	52%	20%

- Summary points:**
- In CAR, while total Wagner-related conflict events remain relatively low as compared to the peak in 2021, over half of all events are concentrated in gold-rich regions as of 2024.
 - In Mali, Wagner’s involvement shows an upward trend in gold mining regions, with the percentage of related conflict events rising from 0% in 2021 to 28% in the first half of 2024.
 - Overall Wagner-related events in Mali continued to trend upwards following the withdrawals of both French and UN peace-keeping troops in 2022 and 2023.
 - Wagner-affiliated Telegram groups reported details on several events included in ACLED’s dataset, including the total Wagner fatalities, individuals leading the operations, and materials used. While this source should not be fully relied on, in this case it may potentially provide a more accurate fatality count (of Wagner troops killed) than that of ACLED.
 - Additional research should be carried out to map specific mining companies linked to the Wagner Group to better understand their connections to Russian interests in Africa. Research should further investigate Russia’s potential use of Wagner to enhance its ability to extract and trade gold on foreign markets.

*2024 data until 27 July is included in these statistics.