Treasury Sanctions Individuals and Entities Fueling Violence in the Central African Republic

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Actions Target Militia Leaders Responsible For Violence and Diamond Companies Facilitating Militants’ Illicit Trade in Blood Diamonds

The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today designated Central African Republic (CAR) militia leaders Alfred Yekatom, Habib Soussou, and Oumar Younous pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13667 for being leaders of groups that threaten the peace, security, or stability of the CAR. OFAC also sanctioned CAR- and Belgium-based diamond companies BADICA and KARDIAM pursuant to E.O. 13667 for providing support to persons threatening the peace, security, or stability of the CAR through the illicit trade in natural resources. This action complements yesterday’s listing of these individuals and entities by the United Nations (UN) under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2196. As a result of today’s action, any assets these individuals and entities may have under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in transactions with them.

“Today’s designations target those responsible for waging a campaign of violence and atrocities against the innocent civilians in the Central African Republic,” said John E. Smith, Acting Director of OFAC. “OFAC is committed to working with our allies and the United Nations to prevent further destabilization in the Central African Republic and bring peace and security to its people.”

The President signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13667 on May 12, 2014 to address the sectarian tension and widespread violence and atrocities in the CAR. This E.O. authorizes Treasury to impose sanctions on those who threaten the peace, security, or stability of the CAR, obstruct the peace process in the CAR, recruit child soldiers, target peacekeepers, fuel the conflict in the CAR through the illicit trade of natural resources, or are responsible for human rights abuses or other atrocities in the CAR.

Alfred Yekatom

Yekatom has been designated for being a leader of an Anti-Balaka armed group that has, or whose members have, threatened the peace, security, or stability of the CAR. Yekatom commands Anti-Balaka forces in and around the capital, Bangui. Yekatom’s militia is suspected of conducting an ethnic cleansing campaign against Muslims; in October 2014, Yekatom oversaw the killing of civilians in Mbaiki, Lobaye Prefecture. Yekatom also used 153 children as fighters in his group before handing them over to the UN in August 2014. Additionally, Yekatom’s forces operate armed checkpoints to illegally tax vehicles travelling on the roads and waterways from Bangui to Cameroon.

Habib Soussou

Soussou has been designated for being a leader of an Anti-Balaka armed group that has, or whose members have, threatened the peace, security, or stability of the CAR. Soussou is the Anti-Balaka commander in Boda, Lobaye Prefecture. In early 2013, the Anti-Balaka in Boda surrounded the city’s approximate 10,000 Muslims in a single district and shot at those approaching or attempting to cross the boundary, which is known as the “red line.” Soussou personally threatened to kill any Muslim crossing the red line. The Boda Anti-Balaka also threatened organizations distributing food aid to the surrounding population.

Oumar Younous

Younous has been designated for being a leader of the Seleka armed group, which has, or whose members have, threatened the peace, security, or stability of the CAR. Younous is a senior Seleka commander and is a close confidante of former President Michel Djotodia and Noureddine Adam, who are both named in the Annex to E.O. 13667. Younous was the commander in the diamond mining town of Sam Ouandja, Haute-Kotto Prefecture and served as the Seleka’s official coordinator for CAR diamond exports to several countries after CAR was suspended from the Kimberley Process — an international initiative designed to stem the flow of conflict diamonds. Younous was also involved in exporting BADICA diamonds to Sudan.

BADICA and KARDIAM

BADICA is one of the largest diamond companies in the CAR, and KARDIAM is BADICA’s branch in Antwerp, Belgium. In May 2013, the Kimberley Process prohibited the export of diamonds from the CAR due to Anti-Balaka and Seleka control over diamond mining areas. BADICA buys rough diamonds from mines that are under Seleka control and smuggles them out of the country for export to KARDIAM. BADICA and its affiliates made illicit payments to the Seleka in an effort to smuggle diamonds out of the country. Between mid-2014 and March 2015, BADICA bought over 1,100 carats of diamonds from mines in Seleka-controlled Bria and Sam Ouandja. BADICA’s leadership is closely tied to senior Seleka commanders, including Noureddine Adam. Furthermore, in May 2014, Belgian diamond police seized diamonds intended for KARDIAM that almost certainly originated in the CAR.

For identifying information on the individuals and entities designated today, click here.