

Beat: Miscellaneous

Suicide bomber attacks UN base in Mali, killing 2 peacekeepers

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USPA News - Two United Nations (UN) peacekeepers from Burkina Faso were killed Saturday and nine others were wounded when a suicide bomber attacked a UN patrol base in northern Mali, officials said on Sunday, days after three peacekeepers were wounded in two separate attacks. The latest attack happened at around 11:30 a.m. local time on Saturday when a suicide bomber drove his explosives-laden pick-up truck into a UN patrol base in Ber, a village about 50 kilometers (31 miles) east of Timbuktu on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) said two of its peacekeepers from Burkina Faso were killed in the explosion, while nine other peacekeepers were wounded, including one who was seriously injured. The nationalities of those wounded was not immediately known. David Gressly, the UN's Deputy Special Representative for Mali, strongly condemned Saturday's deadly attack. "This violence is senseless. MINUSMA is paying too high a price while its peacekeepers are in Mali to ensure a return to peace and stability. These attacks reinforce our determination to continue our mission with the Malian people," he said. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the attack, with his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric saying that Ban was "deeply saddened" by the deaths. "Such attacks will not deter the United Nations from its efforts to support the Malian people in their search for peace in their country," Dujarric remarked. The suicide bombing came just days after three other peacekeepers were injured in two separate attacks. On Thursday, two peacekeepers were seriously injured when their UN vehicle drove over a mine near Aguelhok in northeastern Mali. The following day, another MINUSMA peacekeeper was injured when his vehicle was damaged by a mine. Fighting in northern Mali began in January 2012 with al-Qaeda-linked fighters battling to gain independence and autonomy in the region. President Amadou Toumani Toure was ousted in a coup d'etat in March 2012 for failing to handle the crisis, and by April 2012, much of the region was under the control of rebel forces. Responding to requests from the Malian government, French and African forces were deployed in an effort to prevent rebels from advancing south and reaching the country's capital. The forces succeeded, capturing key cities and towns from militants before handing over security responsibilities to MINUSMA in July 2013. The mission of MINUSMA is to help Malian authorities implement a transitional roadmap towards the full restoration of constitutional order, democratic governance and national unity.

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