

Beat: Travel

Roadside bomb kills 4 UN peacekeepers in northern Mali

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USPA News - A United Nations (UN) vehicle struck a roadside bomb in northern Mali on Tuesday, killing four peacekeepers from Chad and seriously injuring six more, officials said, making it one of the worst attacks to have targeted the blue helmets in the West African nation. The attack happened at around noon local time on Tuesday when a vehicle part of a UN convoy drove over an explosive device on a road north of Kidal, about 290 kilometers (180 miles) northeast of Gao.

The bombing followed other attacks against UN peacekeepers in recent weeks, including a suicide bombing against a UN base in mid-August. Olivier Salgado, a spokesman for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), said four peacekeepers were killed while 15 others were injured, including six who were very seriously injured. All those killed and injured were from the Republic of Chad, he added. Those wounded were being evacuated to Dakar, Senegal, and Gao. It was not immediately known who was responsible for the attack. Albert Koenders, the UN's Special Representative for Mali and the head of MINUSMA, strongly condemned Tuesday's deadly bombing and said he was outraged by the recent series of attacks. "I am outraged by such a wave of violence against our peacekeepers," he said. "A peace process is underway which some want to compromise. It is totally unacceptable and irresponsible." Koenders said the attacks would not deter the United Nations, and MINUSMA will continue to fulfill its mandate. "For now, however, my thoughts go out for today's victims and their families. My prayers are also with the injured and I wish them a speedy recovery," the Special Representative added. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the attack, with his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric saying that Ban was "deeply saddened" by the deaths. "These attacks will not alter the determination of the United Nations to support the Malian people in their search for peace," Dujarric remarked. Tuesday's attack came just days after another MINUSMA vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb, injuring nine Chadian peacekeepers. And days earlier, on August 16, two peacekeepers from Burkina Faso were killed and nine others were wounded when a suicide bomber attacked a UN patrol base in Ber, a village east of Timbuktu. 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'état 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 to implement a transitional roadmap towards the full restoration of constitutional order, democratic governance and national unity.

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