

Beat: Local

3 Senegalese peacekeepers killed after ambush in Sudan's Darfur

-, 14.10.2013, 13:43 Time

USPA News - Three Senegalese peacekeepers were killed Sunday when unidentified gunmen attacked a United Nations (UN) police unit escorting a water convoy in Sudan's troubled Darfur region, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) said on Monday. The attack happened on Sunday morning when a group of unidentified gunmen ambushed a UNAMID Formed Police Unit detail escorting a water convoy from the town of El Geneina to the nearby regional headquarters in West Darfur.

The detail was part of the joint AU-UN mission. A spokesperson for the mission said three Senegalese peacekeepers were killed and one was injured, but his or her condition was not immediately known. The assailants also hijacked one of the vehicles in the convoy, but it was later recovered about 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) from the scene of the attack. UNAMID Joint Special Representative Mohamed Ibn Chambas condemned the "grave criminal act" in the strongest possible terms. "Such incidents are a reminder to all of us of the great price everyone pays in the absence of peace," he said. "Our peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice while attempting to bring peace to Darfur." Sudanese service members quickly responded to the attack and engaged the gunmen in a firefight, resulting in an unknown number of casualties on both sides. Chambas commended the quick response but called on the Sudanese government to "do its best" to bring the perpetrators to justice. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the attack and offered his condolences to the families and friends of those killed. "All too often UNAMID peacekeepers are attacked and killed in the line of duty, while helping the Sudanese bring peace to Darfur," Ban said through his spokesman, Martin Nesirky. "These attacks are unacceptable." The latest attack took place on the same road where a UNAMID patrol was ambushed in October 2012, resulting in the deaths of four Nigerian peacekeepers and an unknown number of injuries. Officials said mission personnel were heavily fired upon from several directions in last year's ambush. Sunday's attack comes just days after the murder of a peacekeeper in North Darfur. The attack occurred on Friday afternoon when armed men stabbed to death a Zambian peacekeeper who was parking a mission vehicle at his private accommodation in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. About 19,150 troops, military observers and police officers and nearly 4,500 civilians currently serve with UNAMID, which assumed peacekeeping duties from an earlier African Union mission at the start of 2008. A total of 56 UNAMID blue helmets have been killed in the line of duty while serving in Darfur. The UNAMID force is tasked with protecting civilians, promoting an inclusive peace process and help ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance across Darfur, an arid region on Sudan's western flank. Fighting and large-scale displacement has convulsed the region since 2003 when rebels took up arms against the Government, whose military forces responded with the support of allied militiamen.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1488/3-senegalese-peacekeepers-killed-after-ambush-in-sudans-darfur.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619