

7 Tanzanian peacekeepers killed after ambush on UN convoy in Sudan's Darfur

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USPA News - Seven Tanzanian peacekeepers were killed Saturday when unidentified gunmen ambushed a United Nations (UN) convoy in Sudan's troubled Darfur region, just days after two aid workers were killed when they were caught up in a clash between Sudanese troops and rebels. The attack happened at around 9 a.m. local time on Saturday when a group of unidentified armed assailants attacked a convoy composed of troops and police of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

It occurred approximately 25 kilometers (15 miles) west of the mission's Khor Abeche team site in South Darfur. The multinational force said its convoy came under heavy fire from a large group of assailants, resulting in seven Tanzanian peacekeepers being killed and 17 others being injured. Among those injured are four UNAMID police officers, including two female police advisers, and 13 military troops. "Following an extended firefight, the patrol was extracted by UNAMID reinforcements that arrived from the Mission's Khor Abeche and Manawashi team sites," the force said in a statement. It was not immediately known who was responsible for the attack, which was the worst in the five-year history of UNAMID. "The Mission condemns in the strongest possible terms those responsible for this heinous attack on our peacekeepers," said UNAMID Joint Special Representative Mohamed Ibn Chambas. "The perpetrators should be on notice that they will be pursued for this crime and gross violation of international humanitarian law." UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was "outraged" to learn of Saturday's "heinous attack" and called on the Sudanese government to take swift action to bring the perpetrators to justice. He also expressed his "deepest sympathies" to the families of the casualties, the Tanzanian government, and all UNAMID personnel. Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird also condemned the attack, calling it reprehensible. "Canada is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security conditions in Darfur and across Sudan," he said. "This incident underscores the failure of partial peace agreements in Sudan, and the need for comprehensive solutions to Sudan's conflicts." The deadly attack comes just days after two Sudanese workers from World Vision International were killed in a grenade explosion at the organization's compound near Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. It was the worst incident of violence against World Vision employees since 2010, when eight of its staff members were killed in an attack in Pakistan. World Vision described the grenade explosion as an "inadvertent attack" which occurred as Sudanese government troops and rebels clashed just outside the organization's compound. It led World Vision to initially suspend its programs across South Darfur, affecting more than 1 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs), but limited operations have since been resumed. 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 51 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.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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