Beat: Miscellaneous

Four UN peacekeepers killed in West Darfur ambush

-, 04.10.2012, 21:32 Time

USPA News - Four Nigerian peacekeepers were killed Tuesday and several others were injured when gunmen ambushed a United Nations (UN) patrol in Sudan`s troubled Darfur region, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) said on Wednesday. The international community condemned the assault.

The attack happened during the late evening hours on Tuesday when a group of unidentified assailants ambushed a Nigerian military patrol in El Geneina, about 2 kilometers (1.2 mile) from UNAMID`s regional headquarters in West Darfur. The military patrol was part of the joint AU-UN mission. "UNAMID personnel, who were heavily fired upon from several directions, returned fire," a spokesperson said on Wednesday, confirming four Nigerian peacekeepers were killed while eight others were injured. "UNAMID and local authorities are working at the scene of the incident." The international community strongly condemned the ambush and called on the Sudanese authorities to launch a full investigation to find those responsible. "The Mission condemns in the strongest terms, this criminal attack on our peacekeepers who are here in the service of Darfur`s people," said Lt. General Patrick Nyamvumba, the Mission`s Force Commander and officer-in-charge. The UN Security Council, which includes China, France, Russia, Britain, and the United States, also condemned the attack. "The members of the Security Council expressed their condolences to the families of the peacekeepers killed in the attack, as well as to the Government of Nigeria," the members said in a joint statement. It added: "They (the Members) called on the Government of Sudan to swiftly investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice. The members of the Security Council reiterated their full support for UNAMID and called on all parties in Darfur to cooperate with the mission." Tuesday`s deadly attack came two months after the UN Security Council (UNSC) voted to extend the mandate for the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur for another twelve months. The 15-member body said the mission will be reconfigured to focus on the areas of Darfur with the highest security threats. About 21,600 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 42 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-13/four-un-peacekeepers-killed-in-west-darfur-ambush.html

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