



Seven UN peacekeepers shot at Congo protest

Mon May 14, 2012 10:42pm GMT

(Adds U.N. Security Council statement condemning attack)

KINSHASA May 14 (Reuters) - Seven United Nations peacekeepers in Congo were wounded when gunmen opened fire at a protest in the East of the country on Monday, drawing condemnation from the U.N. Security Council.

There were no details on the condition of the peacekeepers, who the U.N. Security Council said were from Pakistan.

Several more peacekeepers in the contingent were injured by stone throwers when a base in South Kivu province was surrounded by crowd of 1,000 people, the United Nations said.

"The seven wounded peacekeepers have been taken to Goma, North Kivu, for medical treatment," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesman, Martin Nesirky, said in a statement.

The U.N. Security Council strongly condemned the attack in a statement later on Monday, saying that at least 11 peacekeepers were injured during the incident.

The 15-member council "reiterated their serious concern about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the Kivus and the impact on the Congolese population."

"They encouraged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the perpetrators of the attacks are brought to justice swiftly," the statement said.

The United Nations said the protest was against attacks by Rwandan Hutu rebel FDLR forces in the area, and it suspected that local Mai Mai militia shot at the blue helmets from within the crowd. Reinforcements have been sent to the area, which is calm but tense, the U.N. added.

Congo's last war officially ended nearly a decade ago but its East is still plagued by a plethora of local and foreign armed groups.

The U.N. mission in Congo is one of the world's largest, but its men are stretched thinly across the vast nation and the force is frequently accused of not doing enough to protect civilians from gunmen.
(Additional reporting by Michelle Nichols; Writing by David Lewis; Editing by Rosalind Russell and Cynthia Osterman)

© Thomson Reuters 2012