

Beat: Miscellaneous

Roadside bomb kills French soldier in northeast Mali

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USPA News - A French special forces soldier was killed Monday and two others were injured when a roadside bomb struck a light vehicle in northeast Mali, France's defense ministry said. It raises the number of French troops killed in the west African country to six.

The attack happened early Monday afternoon when a light vehicle carrying special forces drove over an improvised explosive device (IED) between Tin Zaouaten and Boughessa in northeast Mali, where French and African forces have battled al-Qaeda-linked fighters in recent months. The special forces were conducting a search and reconnaissance operation when the bomb exploded, killing a 32-year-old corporal and injuring two other service members. The victims were immediately airlifted to a nearby field hospital where they were reported to be in a serious condition, defense officials said. French President Francois Hollande said he learned of the casualty with `great sadness` and offered his condolences to the corporal's family, according to a statement from the presidential palace. "He greets with emotion the determination and courage of the French forces engaged in Mali alongside Malian and African forces," it said. "He expresses his full confidence in their ability to carry out the final phase of their mission." Fighting in northern Mali began in January 2012 as insurgent groups have been campaigning for independence and autonomy in the region. President Amadou Toumani Toure was ousted in a coup d'etat in March 2012 for failing to handle the crisis, and by April, much of the region had been completely seized by rebel forces. Responding to requests from the Malian government, the French government decided in January of this year to deploy some 4,500 troops to Mali in an effort to prevent rebels from advancing south and reaching the country's capital. Six French soldiers have now died in the conflict. Last week, the United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted a resolution to create a 12,600-strong peacekeeping operation in Mali, taking over from French and African forces as they withdraw. The force is to begin its operations on July 1, but the council will first have to review the overall security situation to determine whether major combat operations have ended.

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