Beat: News

Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for attack on Somali hotel

Estimated 10 killed more than 12 wounded

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SOMALI HOTEL ATTACKED BY MILITANTS. AL-SHABAAB CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY
At least 10 Killed in Attack at Hotel in Somali Capital

At least 10 people have been killed and more than a dozen were wounded in an attack on a hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia’s capital.

Witnesses told VOA's Somali Service that they heard two or three blasts near the Hayat Hotel at the KM4 junction Friday evening.

A police officer told Reuters news service that one car bomb hit near the hotel, and another hit the hotel's gate.

Gunfire could still be heard early Saturday as police tried to flush the attackers out of the hotel, The Associated Press reported.

Islamist militant group al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the blasts. A statement on the group's website said, "Our fighters seized the hotel and are fighting now inside. We are targeting government officials who are in the hotel."

The group, which has been waging an insurgency in Somalia for about 15 years, often targets cafes and hotels like the Hayat in Mogadishu that are patronized by political and security officials.

Meanwhile, security sources told VOA four people were killed and approximately 10 people were wounded in a mortar shell attack elsewhere in the capital.

An affiliate of al-Qaeda, al-Shabab has engaged in a long-running conflict with the federal government.

The group controls much of southern and central Somalia but has been able to extend its influence into areas controlled by the government based in Mogadishu.

In recent weeks fighters affiliated with the group have also attacked targets along the Somalia-Ethiopia border, which has raised concerns about a possible new strategy by al-Shabab.

The attack on Friday marks the first in the capital by the group since Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in May.

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Some information in this report came from Reuters, BBC, Agence France-Presse and The Associated Press.
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