Beat: Miscellaneous

Mali rebels seize Diabaly as French forces continue air attacks

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USPA News - As French armed forces launched a series of air attacks over the weekend on Mali, rebel forces counterattacked and made their way against government troops, officials said Monday. France`s Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian said Malian militants were able to take over the small town of Diabaly, defeating government forces in the area.

The town is just south of militant strongholds in the north and opens up new routes for them. Rebel forces reportedly entered the Segou Region`s Diabaly, which is located around 350 kilometers (220 miles) northeast of Bamako, the country`s capital, during the night and fought Mali`s government troops until taking over. The militants` counterattack comes only a few days after France decided on Friday to deploy armed forces, aiding Malian government troops with aerial attacks in the region against insurgent strongholds, training camps, as well as oil and munition depots. France used Rafale aircraft and Gazelle helicopters to conduct their attacks, reportedly killing dozens of Islamic rebels, although the exact number was uncertain. However, the deaths of at least 11 civilians were also reported. As a result of the airstrikes, Mali was able to retake control of several areas, including Gao, the main city in northern Mali, and Timbuktu. While French authorities have assured that their aerial attacks prevented militants from continuing their advance toward the south and into Bamako, the rebel Islamist group, Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), said the group would now continue their attacks in Mali, Africa and in Europe, as France `attacked Islam.` Rebel leaders also called on French forces to carry out ground attacks `like men.` Fighting in northern Mali began since January 2012 as insurgent groups have been campaigning for independence and autonomy in the region. In March 2012, President Amadou Toumani Toure was ousted in a coup d`etat for failing to handle the crisis, and by April, much of the region had been completely seized by rebel forces.

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