

Somali president escapes roadside bomb attack

A roadside bomb killed three policemen, one of them a senior officer, in Mogadishu Wednesday just minutes after a convoy carrying Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed had driven past.

The bomb went off near Al-Mathal school in southern Mogadishu, as an armoured vehicle went past on patrol, instantly killing the head of police in west Mogadishu, officials told DPA.

'The commander died in the blast and two other policemen died in the hospital,' a government official who requested anonymity, said.

Yusuf has been targeted several times in recent months, including by a mortar attack on his plane as he flew to Djibouti to meet with UN officials to push for a peace deal.

Witnesses said following the attack police raided the nearby school, wounding a student, torturing a security guard and setting fire to a warehouse.

Somalia and some opposition figures, earlier this month, agreed a ceasefire, but Islamic insurgents battling the transitional government have rejected the deal.

Violence has continued unabated and fighting in Mogadishu Tuesday killed at least seven people.

The Horn of Africa nation has been in a state of anarchy since the overthrow of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.

Fighting intensified after transitional federal government troops and their Ethiopian allies wrested control of the capital Mogadishu from the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC).

The UIC brought relative order during its six months in control in 2006.

Al-Shabaab, the UIC's armed wing, has been waging a guerrilla war ever since and hundreds of thousands have fled the vicious fighting in Mogadishu to live in makeshift camps.

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