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**CHAD: Rebels move through south east, seize refugee camp**

NDJAMENA, 11 April 2006 (IRIN) - Streets are deserted, shops shuttered and conditions tense on Tuesday in the south eastern Chadian towns of Am Timan and Goz Beida after gun-toting rebels continued attacks in the region for a third day after occupying a nearby refugee camp.  
  
On Sunday the United Front for Democratic Change (FUCD) rebels headed by Mahamout Nour Ont attacked Haraze Mangueigne, a town on the border with the Central African Republic.   
  
On Monday armed rebels also thought to be with the FUCD seized Goz Amer refugee camp outside the village of Koukou - 250 kilometres east of Sunday’s attack and close to the Sudan border - host to 18,000 refugees from the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan.  
  
“The rebels occupied the camp and accused us of kidnapping the refugees,” an aid worker in the camp who asked not to be named told IRIN by satellite phone on Tuesday. “They stayed in the camp until the morning, took food and stole satellite phones. Conditions now are calm and have returned to normal”.  
  
The rebels told the aid worker they were going on to Am Timan 300 kilometres west of the camp before striking the capital N’djamena before presidential elections on 3 May. The aid worker estimated that the FUCD forces had up to 150 vehicles in the area.  
  
UNHCR told IRIN that it will pull staff out of the Goz Amer camp and another nearby refugee camp at Goz Beida. “We are maintaining a minimum skeletal staff to ensure some continuity and will be looking to get back in as soon as possible,” said UNHCR spokesman Matthew Conway in Abeche.  
  
The UN’s World Food Programme warned in late March that spreading violence in the deserts of eastern Chad could severely hamper humanitarian aid for over a quarter-million Sudanese refugees and displaced Chadians.  
  
No refugees had been harmed in the Goz Amer attack but three Chadian gendarmes deployed at the camp had been wounded and one killed, said Conway. “There are no reports of civilian casualties. The rebels assured us that civilians, refugees and aid workers would not be targeted,” said Conway.   
  
The 118 aid agency staff in the camp at the time of the takeover were prevented from leaving but were also not harmed, Conway added.  
  
Monday’s raid is the latest in a series of attacks in eastern Chad by rebels and army deserters seeking to overthrow President Idriss Deby who is standing for re-election to a third five-year term next month after controversially changing the constitution. The main opposition parties have threatened to boycott and “block” the poll, though they have not explained how.  
  
The FUCD, a coalition of eight rebel factions united against Deby, said on Sunday it had seized three towns in south eastern Chad - Haraze Mangueigne, Am Timan, and Abou Deia. By Monday an FUCD spokesman told journalists their fighters had withdrawn from the three towns ahead of launching their final objective - overrunning the capital.  
  
Residents of Am Timan worry they have not seen the last of the rebels. “We are afraid,” said a civil servant who asked not to be named. And 180 kilometres north east, conditions in Goz Beida are described as “tense but calm”.  
  
Police sources said the Chadian soldiers that defended Haraze Mangueigne on Sunday are now redeploying to defend Am Timan. Deby’s government has repeatedly accused the Sudanese government of supporting the rebels.  
  
“This attack caused considerable damage and suffering,” said government spokesman Hourmadji Moussa Doumgor. “The government of Chad will use all means necessary to catch the people responsible for this new Sudanese aggression.”  
  
The Chad government said a column of 22 Sudanese vehicles entered Chad last week after passing through the Central African Republic to avoid Chadian forces.  
  
President Deby has since December repeatedly claimed the right to pursue insurgents into Sudanese territory after rebels launched an attack on Chadian positions from over the border in Darfur. Sudan has repeatedly denied allegations made by Chad that it is backing the rebels.

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