Beat: Travel

13 killed as security forces defeat coup attempt in South Sudan

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USPA News - Security forces in South Sudan`s capital have defeated a coup attempt by soldiers loyal to a former deputy, the president of the world`s youngest nation said Monday during an address to the nation, while government sources said at least 13 people had been killed. President Salva Kiir, dressed in military uniform and accompanied by senior officials, said the violence began at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday when gunfire erupted at the end of a meeting of the ruling Sudan People`s Liberation Movement (SPLM) party.

It was followed by an attack on the army headquarters near Juba University. Heavy gunfire and artillery fire in the capital Juba and its suburbs continued throughout Monday, witnesses said. The violence prompted hundreds of terrified civilians, many of them women and children, to seek shelter at two United Nations (UN) compounds where they were being provided with basic water supplies and medical treatment. The international airport and embassies were closed as a result of the violence, and witnesses reported seeing large numbers of soldiers being deployed across the capital. Kiir, who called for calm among citizens, said the situation is "under control" but acknowledged that fighting was continuing in some parts of Juba. Health ministry sources said at least 13 people were killed and more than 130 others were injured, some of them critically. A majority of the dead and wounded are civilians, the sources said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Other details about casualties were not immediately available. "An unidentified person near Nyakuron Cultural Center released gunshots in the air and escaped. This was followed later by an attack at the SPLA general headquarters near Juba University by a group of soldiers allied to the former vice president, Dr Riek Machar Teny, and his group," Kiir said. "These attacks continued until this morning." Machar, along with the country`s entire cabinet, was sacked in July in Kiir`s apparent struggle to maintain control of the SPLM. Local media reported that several politicians were arrested after Sunday`s coup attempt, but it was not immediately clear whether Machar was among them. Hilde Johnson, the UN`s Special Representative in South Sudan, said she was deeply concerned about the fighting in the capital. "I urge all parties in the fighting to cease hostilities immediately and exercise restraint. I have been in touch regularly with the key leaders, including at the highest levels, to call for calm," she said. Meanwhile, the U.S. Embassy urged Americans staying in Juba to remain indoors and officials in Washington, D.C. voiced their concern about the situation. "We call on all parties to resolve their differences through peaceful democratic means, not through the use of violence," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said. South Sudan became the world`s newest country when it broke away from Sudan on July 9, 2011, as a culmination of a six-year peace process which began in January 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People`s Liberation Movement (SPLM).

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