

Chadian Rebels Kill 100; Chad Blames Sudan

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DAKAR, Senegal Dec. 18 - At least 100 people were killed in an attack by a rebel group on a town in Chad near its border with Sudan, Chadian officials said, the latest violence to erupt on the long, porous border between the two troubled nations.

A rebel group made up largely of deserters from Chad's army attacked the town of Adré early Sunday morning, Hourmadji Moussa Doumgor, Chad's minister of information, told Reuters.

He blamed the Sudanese government, saying it backed the rebel group, known as the Rally for Democracy and Liberty. The group is demanding that President Idriss Déby of Chad step down.

The attack comes as Chad struggles with a tide of financial, security and political woes. Mr. Déby seized power in 1990, ending a bloody civil war that had tortured the country on and off since its independence in 1960. While Mr. Déby is credited with bringing stability and, under pressure, multiparty democracy to Chad, divisions within the country's powerful military and the ruling Zaghawa tribe have undermined his authority.

Between 600 and 800 soldiers have defected to create a new rebel group in the eastern part of the country. Mr. Déby dissolved his Presidential Guard earlier this fall and replaced it with a new security force, a move widely seen as indicative of his mistrust of elements of the military.

A vast, landlocked nation roughly three times the size of California, Chad has struggled to absorb hundreds of thousands of refugees who flooded across its border with the Darfur region of Sudan, where ethnic warfare rages. At least 200,000 people have been killed in Darfur and millions have been forced from their villages.

The conflict in Darfur, in which several rebel groups, including one led by the Zaghawa tribe, are fighting the Sudanese government and the Arab janjaweed militias allied with it, has threatened to engulf Chad as conflicts have erupted along the border between the two nations.

With less than 3 percent of its land arable and little industry, Chad is desperately poor. The government had agreed to spend most of its profits from oil, discovered there in 1973, on poverty reduction. But in October, just as the revenues began to flow, the government changed its mind.

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