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Rebels Attack Peacekeepers in Somalia

By **REUTERS**

MOGADISHU, [Somalia](#), Nov. 17 (Reuters) — Islamist rebels attacked Ugandan soldiers who are part of an [African Union](#) peacekeeping force on Saturday in Mogadishu and briefly entered their base, but a spokesman for the force said it suffered no casualties.

The raid, which set off a 90-minute battle, took place two days after a fugitive Islamist commander believed to be [Al Qaeda](#)'s leader in Mogadishu, the capital, ordered his fighters to attack the Ugandans and kill their officers.

Capt. Paddy Ankunda, the African Union spokesman, said the rebels “attacked us in two groups using machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, and we defended ourselves.”

Some rebels infiltrated the Ugandan base, he said. “They shared the buildings we occupy — I don’t know how they did that,” Captain Ankunda said. “But we can’t be intimidated and won’t withdraw. We’re here to assist the Somali people and we shall continue doing so.” One insurgent was killed, he said.

In more bloodshed on Saturday, a bus packed with passengers struck a land mine in southern Mogadishu. Local news reports said two people were killed and at least 15 were wounded.

About 1,600 Ugandan soldiers have been here since March to support a fragile interim government backed by the West, the [United Nations](#) and Ethiopia.

Local authorities and their Ethiopian allies have faced an Iraq-style insurgency since the start of the year, when they drove a hard-line Islamic group out of the capital.

The chairman of a local human rights group that tracks casualty figures said Saturday that nearly 470 civilians had been killed in fighting between pro-government forces and insurgents in Mogadishu since October.

“We condemn the international community for watching the cruelty in Somalia like a film and not bothering to help,” said Sudani Ali Ahmed, the chairman of the Elman Peace and Human Rights Organization. “What is going on Somalia is a war crime.”

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