

At least six dead in Somali car bombing

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Up to 11 people were killed when a car bomb went off in front of a popular hotel in the capitol of Somalia on Friday.

The attack occurred at one of Mogadishu's top, most expensive hotels, Hotel Maka, on Friday. The hotel is a popular place for government officials, including members of parliament.

According to the BBC, the hotel is located on one of the city's main roads, which local police say is a heavily guarded area and is normally very safe.

A loud explosion was heard outside of the hotel at about 8 p.m. local time, and reports soon followed of a car on fire. Some witnesses said that there had been an explosion inside the hotel before the car bomb went off, according to the New York Times.

The car explosion was so powerful that it shook the surrounding area. Police official Anshur Nur told AFP that there were "several burning cars, dead and injured people on the ground" after the car exploded.

"There were lots of cars parked outside and some government officials were inside when the blast went off," witness Abdirahman Ali told AFP.

Different reports are saying that anywhere from six to 11 people were killed in the blast, and dozens more were wounded. The BBC reports that one of the dead was a diplomat from Somalia.

The attack was reportedly carried out by members of Shebab, an Islamist insurgent group. The group has been at odds with the Somali government and has been battling with them for years, frequently attacking Mogadishu.

Shebab was responsible for a four-day attack on the Westgate shopping center in Nairobi, in which 67 people were killed last September.

"The three men who attacked the hotel had stayed at the hotel for a few days, but thank Allah their plan failed and an investigation is underway," a hotel security officer told local Garowe Online.

Garowe also reports that one of the attackers was killed in the blast and another, wearing a suicide bomb vest, was taken into custody. He is being questioned by Somali police.