

Beat: Miscellaneous

Car bomb kills 19 Shiite pilgrims in southwestern Pakistan

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USPA News - Nineteen Shiite Muslim pilgrims were killed Sunday when their convoy of buses was struck by a remote-controlled car bomb in southwestern Pakistan, officials said. It came just hours after Pakistani Taliban militants executed 21 paramilitary soldiers.

The attack happened at around 9 a.m. local time on Sunday when a large explosion hit a convoy of three buses which was traveling on a highway in the Daringar area of Mastung district in Balochistan province, which is located approximately 60 kilometers (37 miles) from Quetta. Balochistan Home Secretary Akbar Hussain Durrani said the convoy, which was being escorted by a paramilitary force known as Levies, was struck by an explosion from an explosives-laden parked car. He said about 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of explosives were used for the bomb, which was detonated by a remote. Durrani said nineteen bodies, many of them burned beyond recognition, were recovered from a bus which was completely destroyed by both the blast and a resulting fire. Twenty-five other people were injured and rushed to Bolan Medical Complex where nine remained in a critical condition on Monday. The convoy, which was carrying around 180 pilgrims, had earlier left Quetta and was en-route to the Pakistani border town of Taftan. From there, the Shiite Muslim pilgrims had planned to cross the border into Iran to visit a number of spiritual places, according to local authorities. Pakistani Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf strongly condemned Sunday's attack and ordered local authorities to provide all necessary medical assistance to the injured. "The Prime Minister prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant the bereaved families courage to bear the loss with fortitude," a government statement said. It was not immediately known who was behind the deadly car bombing, and no group immediately claimed responsibility. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his shock over the incident and condemned the targeting of religious minorities. "These cruel acts of violence cannot be justified by any cause or grievance. Their perpetrators should be brought to justice," his spokesman said. The attack came just hours after authorities found the remains of 21 paramilitary soldiers who were kidnapped by Pakistani Taliban militants on Thursday from their posts near the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar. Local officials said the service members were tied up and blindfolded when they were lined up and executed one by one.

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