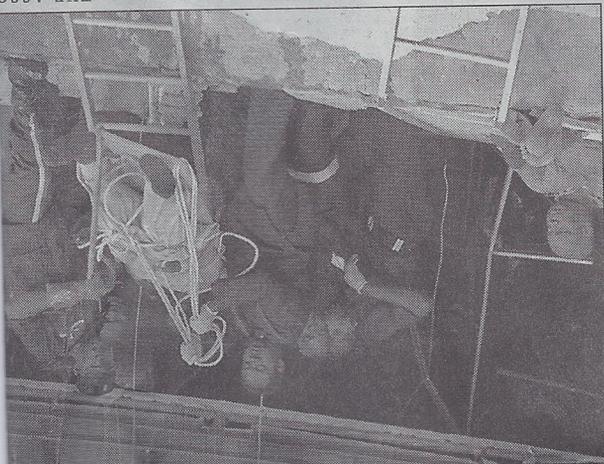


18 killed in bombing of U.N. compound



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Seattle Times

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NWFRIDAY: Two employees were misidentified over development at Cerro lot. David Postman and I First & Goal. Allen owns **WEEKEND PLUS:** Mike Robinson. His name was Friday.

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BY BASHIR ADIGUN AND JON GAMBRELL
 The Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria - A car loaded with explosives crashed into the main United Nations building in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, and exploded Friday, killing at least 18 people.

A radical Muslim sect blamed for a series of attacks in the country claimed responsibility for the bombing, a major escalation of its sectarian fight against Nigeria's weak central government.

The assault in a neighborhood surrounded by heavily fortified diplomatic posts represented the first suicide attack to target foreigners in oil-rich Nigeria, where people already live in fear of the Boko Haram sect. The group, which has reported links to al-Qaida, wants to implement a strict version of Sharia law in the nation and is vehemently opposed to Western education and culture.

While police officers and local officials have primarily borne the brunt of Boko Haram's rage, now everyone seems to be a target in a nation often divided by religion and ethnicity.

"It is an attack on the global community," said Viola Onwuliri, a junior Nigerian foreign minister, as she looked at the bomb site. A sedan loaded with explosives crashed through two gates at the exit of the United Nations compound Friday as guards tried to stop it, witnesses said.

The suicide bomber inside drove the car through the glass front of the main reception area and detonated the explosives, a spokesman for the Nigerian National Emergency Management Agency said.

At least 18 people died in the attack, according to a survey of morgues at four major Abuja hospitals.

The headquarters, known as U.N. House, had offices

deadliest attacks on the United Nations in a decade. Seventeen U.N. civilian staff members were killed along with dozens of others in two car bombings that targeted U.N. and other premises in Algiers on Dec. 11, 2007.

Friday's bombing also came just days after the U.N. marked the anniversary of the Aug. 19, 2003, bombing of U.N. headquarters in Baghdad that killed 15 U.N. employees, including top envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello and seven others.

Friday's attack punched a huge hole in the building, which is in the same neighborhood as the U.S. Embassy and other diplomatic posts in Abuja.

"This is getting out of hand," said a U.N. employee who identified himself as Bodunrin. "If they can get into the U.N. House, they can reach anywhere."

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's office called the attack "barbaric, senseless and cowardly." The statement also promised to increase security in the nation's capital.

However, Jonathan's administration has struggled to improve security in Nigeria, a nation of 150 million largely split between a Christian south and Muslim north. The April election of Jonathan, a Christian, triggered religious violence

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BY DAVID R AND SAMMA The Associated

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