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Over 100 Killed as French Troops Attack Mali Town

By Jason Ditz

January 12, 2013

French warplanes attacked the disputed town of Konna in the nation of Mali today, sparking fighting that left well over 100 people dead, including dozens of government soldiers and Islamist rebels.

The French invasion began yesterday after the Islamist forces seized Konna from the southern Malian junta, leaving the junta with no obvious route to attack the north and leaving several key cities exposed to rebel attacks.

The French government has been vague on the number of troops it has sent and intends to send to Mali, but at least one soldier was confirmed killed today in the attack on Konna, a helicopter pilot.

In addition to France, other EU nations have contributed air support for the war, and both Niger and Senegal have each announced 500 ground troops each for the war, which aims at occupying the northern two-thirds of the country and placing them under junta rule.

The bulk of the war effort appears to be France's however, since the Islamists have shown themselves to be more than a match for the southern Malian military, which lost the north in a series of battles over last spring.

This leaves concerns in France that they are setting themselves up for blowback from this was at home, with a significant Malian minority living in France. The French government has stepped up security around its buildings and public transportation in anticipation of retaliatory strikes.