

UN peacekeepers in Africa involved in child sex abuse?

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United Nations: The United Nations said Tuesday it has received allegations that U.N. peacekeepers sexually abused street children in Central African Republic, where French troops are also being investigated for alleged sex abuse against boys.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Central African Republic was informed of the allegations on Friday and notified the country whose troops allegedly committed the abuse on Saturday. He refused to name the country.

He said the alleged abuse took place in the capital, Bangui. It could go back to 2014 and have continued this year, he said.

"We're obviously looking into it," Dujarric said. "We expect their investigative procedures to go on, and to report back to us as quickly as possible."

He said medical care and assistance is being provided to the alleged victims.

If the allegations are substantiated, Dujarric said, it would be "a grave violation" of the United Nations' "zero tolerance" policy for sexual abuse and the code of conduct for U.N. peacekeepers.

"The member state would be requested to take swift and appropriate punitive action," he said.

The new allegations follow strong criticism of the United Nations' handling of allegations of child sexual abuse by French soldiers in Central African Republic, who were never under U.N. command.

Confidential documents have shown that the U.N.'s top human rights officials did not follow up for more than half a year on allegations collected by their own staffers, while French authorities pressed for more information. France opened a formal judicial inquiry just last month.

On Monday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed an independent panel Monday to review the U.N.'s actions.

French troops arrived in Central African Republic in late 2013 and had a U.N. mandate to assist an African Union peacekeeping operation which was taken over by a U.N. mission last September.

- AP