3 Russian Pilots Kidnapped in Darfur

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Gunmen in Darfur kidnapped three Russian pilots working for a company transporting food for international peacekeepers, Sudanese media reported Monday.

Sudanese military spokesman Sawarmy Khaled said the pilots were kidnapped on Sunday in Nyala, the provincial capital of the South Darfur province, and the army had surrounded the neighborhood where they are believed to be held.

The kidnapping comes just a month after another Russian helicopter pilot was abducted by *janjaweed* militiamen in Darfur after his helicopter was forced to land.

The pilot, who also worked for the joint UN-African Union peacekeepers, was eventually recovered.

In its account of Sunday's kidnapping, the Sudanese daily al-Sahafa said three pilots were kidnapped as they left the Nyala airport heading for downtown.

The incident happened near the villa in which the pilots were staying while in Sudan, the Russian presidential envoy to Sudan, Mikhail Margelov, said Monday, Interfax reported. He

said the kidnappers stopped the pilot's van by blocking the road with several jeeps.

(AP, MT)

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