New Case of UN Soldier Accused of Child Sex Abuse in C. Africa

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The UN mission in the Central African Republic is investigating a new case of child sex abuse involving one of its peacekeepers, the UN spokesman said Thursday.

The head of the MINUSCA mission, Babacar Gaye, launched an investigation after allegations surfaced on Tuesday that a peacekeeper serving in the east of the country had raped a girl under the age of 16.

The peacekeeper's country of origin was not released, but a diplomatic source said he was from Morocco.

The United Nations has asked Morocco to open an investigation and is awaiting a response.

"Measures have been taken to protect the alleged victim, who has received the appropriate care," said spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

The fresh allegations came a day after Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon ordered an independent external review of the UN's handling of allegations of child sex abuse by French and African troops from December 2013 to June 2014.

The United Nations has been badly shaken by accusations that it failed to act quickly to respond to serious claims that the troops had sexually abused children at a camp for displaced civilians near Bangui.

In the latest case, the UN spokesman said the UN was contacted by a local organization that runs a clinic where the girl was examined and that action was taken within 24 hours of receiving the information.

Dujarric said that once the suspect's identity is confirmed, the United Nations expects "the troop-contributing country to not only repatriate that person, but that the soldier should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Moroccan troops are serving as part of the 10,000-strong MINUSCA force that took over an African Union mission in September to restore order to the country after it exploded into violence triggered by a coup in 2012.

A UN report by rights investigators last year detailed testimony from children in the Central African Republic who said they were sexually abused by French troops and soldiers from Chad and Equatorial Guinea.

France announced last month that 14 soldiers were facing possible charges in the case that only came to light when The Guardian newspaper reported it in April.