

Cargo plane crashes along Nile River in South Sudan

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Juba, South Sudan: A cargo plane taking off from the South Sudanese capital of Juba crashed along the shore of the Nile River, killing at least 25 people.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene of the crash saw the bodies, including those of children. Parts of the plane were scattered in a bushy area populated with a few homes on the east side of the Nile. It was not clear if some of those who died had been on the ground.

Presidential spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny said the Russian-made plane had been bound for the Paloch oil fields in Upper Nile state. Rebels and government forces have been battling for control of Upper Nile state.

The Antonov plane crashed shortly after taking off Wednesday morning, Ateny said. He gave no more details.

Planes could still be seen taking off and arriving at the airport in Juba on Wednesday as many people gathered near the crash site about 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) from the airport.

Many parts of South Sudan, which became an independent nation in 2011, have been hit by violence since December 2013, with government forces under President Salva Kiir battling rebels led by his former deputy, Riek Machar. Fighting persists despite a peace agreement signed in August.

Juba, where the violence started, is now peaceful.

- AP