

4 small bombs explode at Myanmar casino hotel

Yangon – Four small bombs exploded at a casino in northeastern Myanmar, causing minor damage but no injuries, state-controlled media and a casino employee said Tuesday, the latest in a series of blasts in the military-ruled country.

The attack happened early Monday at the Golden Triangle Paradise Resort Hotel in Tachilek, near the border with Thailand, the New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported. There were no immediate claims of responsibility, it said.

A hotel employee contacted by phone from Bangkok, Thailand, confirmed that four small blasts occurred around 3 a.m. near the employees' quarters at the hotel, which also houses a casino.

The employee, who insisted on anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said the blasts did not appear to be dangerous but were rather meant to scare guests and employees. About 70 Thai guests checked out after the explosions, he said.

Tachilek, opposite the Thai city of Mae Sai, is about 550 kilometers (340 miles) northeast of Yangon, Myanmar's largest city. As a border town, it is notorious for smuggling, especially of heroin and methamphetamine, and has a history of violent incidents.

It is in an area vulnerable to attack by ethnic Shan rebels who oppose Myanmar's military government.

The bombing occurred after warnings from the junta in the press Saturday that internal and external groups had sent trained „destructionists“ to explode bombs in busy places in the country to cause panic.

Three bombs exploded last month at railway stations at the new capital and in Yangon and at a circus show, killing two people and injuring five others.

Terrorism is rare but not unknown in Myanmar, which has been under military rule almost continuously since 1962.

In September, the government crushed nonviolent pro-democracy demonstrations, detaining thousands and killing at least 31 people, according to a U.N. investigator.