

Kinkel dismayed at deaths of African presidents.

Reuters, April 7, 1994

BONN, April 7 (Reuter) - German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel expressed dismay and deep concern on Thursday at the deaths of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, killed in a rocket attack on their plane.

"I learned with great dismay that the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi had been killed when their aircraft crashed in the Rwandan capital Kigali," Kinkel said in a statement.

"This tragedy must not plunge the process of political reconciliation, set into motion with such great effort, back into violent confrontations."

Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, 57, and Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira, 38, were travelling together from Tanzania where they had attended a peace summit.

Kinkel reported that Rwandan army units seemed to have skirmished and were still fighting in Kigali.

Germany's ambassador to Rwanda, Dieter Hoelscher, told German television that the events in the African country seemed to have been sparked by a "dispute in the armed forces".

Kinkel said Burundi's capital, Bujumbura, appeared to be calm but advised all German nationals living in the country, part of which belonged to Germany's East Africa colony before World War One, to remain indoors.

"I am deeply concerned about developments in the region," Kinkel said, "particularly as the situation in Burundi had seemed to be stabilising after the tragic events of last year."

Eyewitnesses saw the United Nations headquarters in Kigali come under mortar fire in shooting and shelling that erupted after the two presidents were killed, envoy Hoelscher told ARD television.

Hoelscher said that the houses of two German families living near the U.N. building had been damaged.

The Rwandan government appealed for calm and asked residents to stay in their homes until further notice. It also ordered security forces to restore order.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994