

Boutros-Ghali planning possible U.N. Rwanda pullout

Goodman, Anthony

Reuters, April 13, 1994

UNITED NATIONS, April 13 (Reuter) - Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Wednesday he had called for plans to be drawn up for a possible withdrawal of the 2,500-strong U.N. force in Rwanda.

In a letter to Security Council President Colin Keating of New Zealand Boutros said he was acting in light of a decision by Belgium to pull out its 440-man contingent. Belgium is the former colonial ruler of the central African country, racked by a renewed outbreak of civil war.

"In the light of this decision by the government of Belgium, it is my assessment that it would be extremely difficult for UNAMIR (the U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda) to carry out its tasks effectively," Boutros wrote.

"The continued discharge by UNAMIR of its mandate will become untenable unless the Belgian contingent is replaced by another equally well-equipped contingent or unless the government of Belgium reconsiders its decision to withdraw its contingent."

Boutros-Ghali said that, in these circumstances, he had asked his special representative in Rwanda, Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh of Cameroon, and the UNAMIR commander, General Romeo Dallaire of Canada, "to prepare plans for the withdrawal of UNAMIR should this prove necessary and send their recommendations to me in this regard."

The U.N. force also includes about 940 troops from Bangladesh and 840 from Ghana and much smaller contingents from more than 20 other countries. The United Nations also has a large humanitarian operation in Rwanda.

UNAMIR was deployed late last year to help implement an agreement signed in Arusha, Tanzania, in August between the government and the Rwanda Patriotic Front ending a three-year civil war.

Apart from the impending Belgian withdrawal, the force's mandate became impossible when renewed violence erupted in Rwanda a week ago after President Juvenal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi died in a plane crash as it was landing at Kigali, Rwanda's capital.

The government said the plane was shot down by the RPF rebels, whose forces are now taking control of Kigali.

Boutros-Ghali said he was notified of Belgium's intention to pull out its UNAMIR contingent at a meeting in Bonn Tuesday with Foreign Minister Willy

Claes.
(c) Reuters Limited 1994