

Remnants of Beaten Army Enter Zaire.

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REMNANTS of Rwanda's defeated army were ordered to cross into Zaire at the weekend, bringing weapons with them in the hope of fighting another day.

Thousands of troops pulled into Goma by bus and lorry after dark when a ceasefire promised by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) again failed to materialise.

Soldiers said they had been ordered to abandon Gisenyi, the last government stronghold, in the face of impending RPF attack.

They hauled artillery, mortars and small arms, all apparently with the consent of Zairean troops and border guards, who abandoned the ritual search for weapons.

They brought at least four anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank weapons. Pilots guided three helicopters across the border.

The chief of staff of Rwanda's beleaguered army, Major-General Augustin Bizimungu, denied his men were abandoning resistance.

Many insist they want to continue fighting, saying only a lack of ammunition has forced them to retreat. But clearly the army is in disarray and demoralised. Pulling it across the border appears a desperate attempt to get the RPF to ease its conditions for a ceasefire, by persuading it resistance might

be renewed from Zaire.

Zaire's willingness to host the soldiers suggests President Mobutu Sese Seko is not yet prepared to abandon his support for the defunct regime.

United Nations mediators, and talks chaired by the French military commander in Goma, General Jean-Claude Lafourcade, have failed to pressurise the Rwandan military into meeting the RPF's demands.

After a meeting on Saturday, Gen Bizimungu said he did not expect a halt to the fighting.

"I think they want to take Gisenyi," Gen Bizimungu said. "After all, it is the best town we have left in Rwanda. I have no hope for a ceasefire at all. The rebels have advanced a lot. I don't think they'll be interested in one. If there is to be a ceasefire it must be unilateral, but the RPF are setting conditions."

A source close to the negotiations said the RPF had set three conditions for a ceasefire. Gen Bizimungu agreed to the first, the closure of the radio station responsible for inciting the slaughter of Tutsis.

But the general rejected RPF demands that members of the rump government be handed over for trial for genocide, and that the last pocket of government resistance surrender.

The commando training unit at

Mutura, 15 miles from Gisenyi, is holding up the final RPF advance on the city.

But Gen Bizimungu conceded that Gisenyi is lost, and that the RPF can set surrender terms.

The soldiers left in Gisenyi are unlikely to mount a cohesive defence. Most spend their days drunk, harassing refugees and looting. Gunfire rattles through the city and across the border. Sometimes soldiers shoot other looters, sometimes anyone they choose. To refuse to hand over property is deemed sufficient reason to be killed.

The soldiers who crossed the border are crowded into a sports centre in Goma, and are all but abandoned. Close to 4,000 mutilated men have nothing more than a blanket to protect them from the cold nights. Some have horrific injuries.

A bullet had pushed one young

man's mouth and nose into the centre of a crater that was his face. Another's head was shorn of skin by fire. The count of those with missing limbs is not much lower than the able-bodied. Filthy bandages wrap rotting wounds. The dead lie beside the road.

Overwhelmed by the shame of defeat and mutilation, the men are aggressively hostile to any but those who can help them. Most of the seriously wounded were transferred by the International Committee of the Red Cross from the military hospital in Gisenyi.

A soldier planted a Red Cross flag at the entrance of the sports centre in the hope of winning attention. But, given the scale of the suffering in and around Goma, those responsible for instigating much of it command little sympathy.

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