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Subject

SECURITY COUNCIL: RWANDA

Summary

German Foreign Ministry adopts a cautious approach to further UN involvement in Rwanda. The OAU should continue its efforts. Both sides in the conflict are so heavily armed that peacekeeping would be impossible and peacemaking would require an enormous commitment of forces.

Action

For information.

Report

We called today on Wienand, who has special responsibility for Rwanda in the section of the German Foreign Ministry dealing with Central Africa. He invited his colleague Puppe, who had been a member of the German Embassy in Kigali until its staff were withdrawn last month, to join us for the discussion.

2 Puppe said that virtually all foreign missions in Kigali, which had numbered around ten, had ceased operating as a result of the heavy fighting going on in the capital. Although there had been no specific threats against the German Embassy, Europeans generally felt at risk because of the unpopularity of Belgium as the former colonial power in Rwanda. A rumour had circulated, for instance, that Belgians had been responsible for the shooting down of the Presidential aircraft, and a number of long-time Belgian residents of Rwanda had been murdered. French people had also been killed because they were thought to be Belgian, and

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Germans needed to take care not to display their flag because of its similarity to the Belgian flag. Wienand noted that up until World War I, Germany had been the colonial power in Rwanda. As in other colonial situations, Germans could feel some sense of gratitude that the loss of their colonies in World War I had absolved them of future responsibility for coping with post-colonial problems of the kind that had flared up in Rwanda.

3 Nevertheless Germany was making an effort to help, and an initial contribution of DM2 million had been announced in humanitarian relief. (We informed them of the announcement of New Zealand's contribution). The prospects of getting relief supplies to the capital were grim, as noted in Ottawa's C01806. It had become virtually impossible to fly into Kigali. The refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries were somewhat easier to reach, but their situation was not much better, located as most of them were in some of the poorest desert areas of Tanzania. Water was a problem at the moment, but if the rains came, mud would make the roads impassable.

4 We asked how Germany viewed the relative roles of the UN, the OAU and the EU in attempts to mediate in the conflict between the interim government and the RPF. Wienand replied that Germany was worried about the UN's role. While Dallaire was doing a good job, he was stuck between two rival armies, both armed with heavy weapons, and both intent on continuing to fight. There was accordingly no peace to keep, and peacemaking would require forces beyond those which UN members were likely to want to provide. Somalia was an example fresh in the minds of the world community, as of course was Bosnia. The UN could not afford another "failure", coming hard on the heels of its experience in these two countries.

5 As for the OAU, it was feeling its way towards a greater involvement in mediating conflicts on the African continent, but the discussions among the parties which it had initiated did not seem to have produced any results so far. Tanzania deserved credit for its efforts, while other neighbouring states, such as Zaire and Burundi, had links to one side or the other which would rule them out of an honest broker role.

6 The European Union was, once again, placed in a rather awkward position as a result of diverging approaches among its own members towards a particular problem. France and Belgium, as previous colonial powers in Africa, tended to have certain biases, France towards the Hutu, Belgium towards the Tutsi, and these gave rise to certain difficulties in reaching a common position, although both countries were trying hard to work together in the CFSP context. Wienand commented that not so long ago, France or Belgium would despatch armed forces to former colonies in Africa without much hesitation to sort out conflicts which arose. Those days were gone. African nations no longer accepted an

ongoing policeman role of this kind, and former colonial powers also hesitated to commit forces to intervene between heavily armed parties to an African conflict.

7 On the basis of her two years in Kigali, Puppe commented that in addition to tribal rivalries, the control of limited resources in Rwanda played a part in the conflict. The country had 7.5 million people in a very small land area. In rural areas, family sizes of 14-16 were normal. Prices for Rwanda's main export, coffee, were low. She also said that as far as the widespread massacres were concerned, there was an organised dimension to it. Each side had lists of people to be killed. The methodical aspect of events immediately after the shooting down of the Presidential aircraft had led her to believe that this action too had been planned.

Comment

8 It was useful to obtain an on-the-ground assessment from someone who had served in Kigali. German familiarity with conditions there no doubt reinforces their cautious approach to the possibility of international intervention in this conflict.

End Message