

France says sending 400 soldiers to Rwanda

Reuters, April 9, 1994

PARIS, April 9 (Reuter) - France said 280 of its soldiers landed in the Rwandan capital Kigali on Saturday and 120 more would be flown there later in the day to prepare the evacuation of French nationals from the war-torn country.

The armed forces chief of staff, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, told a news conference that two French government workers in Kigali and a French priest in northern Rwanda were believed to have been killed in ethnic violence since Wednesday.

Lanxade said the operation, code-named "Amaryllis", aimed "to take all necessary precautions to permit the safe departure of our nationals".

A French businessman in Rwanda said French soldiers had taken up positions at Kigali airport and the French embassy in the capital.

"The French embassy is very calm," Jean-Pierre Cadran told France-Info radio by telephone. "French soldiers are there and French soldiers are also holding the airport. They are clearing the main streets in the city."

Earlier on Saturday the Foreign Ministry said the decision to send troops to the central African country had been taken "in the face of the spread and the worsening of the violence in Kigali".

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