

UN chief agrees Belgian troops can pull out

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BRUSSELS, April 13 (Reuter) - United Nations Secretary- General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has agreed Belgium can withdraw its contingent of U.N. peacekeepers from Rwanda, Belgian BRTN radio said on Wednesday.

“Boutros-Ghali has responded positively to the request by (Belgian Foreign) minister Claes to withdraw the Belgian blue helmets from Rwanda,” BRTN said.

It said it had received the information from a good source. The foreign ministry was not immediately available for comment.

Claes met Boutros-Ghali in Bonn on Tuesday evening.

BRTN said the U.N. chief would still like a formal decision from the U.N. Security Council, adding the council could meet today. “This way Belgium would avoid a unilateral withdrawal of its troops,” BRTN said.

Belgium has about 420 “blue helmets” in Rwanda where fierce fighting again broke out on Wednesday as rebels closed in on the capital Kigali.

Rebel reinforcements apparently infiltrated overnight on Tuesday from just outside Kigali, awash in tribal bloodshed since President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed last Wednesday.

Ten Belgian U.N. peacekeepers were killed last week while trying to protect Rwandan Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingyimana, who was later killed. The rest of the Belgian troops are now camped at the airport.

Six Belgian civilians have also been killed in the ethnic violence.

The Belgians are unpopular among the majority Hutu tribe which believes they support the rebels. There were also rumours in Kigali that Belgium was involved in the death of the president whose plane was shot down as it landed in Kigali.

Belgium has denied both charges.

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