

## Brussels [Belgian paratroopers leave for Rwanda evacuation mission]

AFP, April 9, 1994

BRUSSELS, April 9 (AFP) - A third contingent of Belgian paratroopers left here by air late Saturday for Nairobi on their way to assist in the evacuation of about 2,000 Belgians and other foreigners from Kigali.

A Belgian Defence Department spokesman confirmed the departure but would give no further details. However, Belgian television said there were about 285 troops on board.

Earlier Saturday, two aircraft carrying about 400 parachutists left the Melsbroek military air base.

The spokesman, Colonel Freddy van Deweghe, would not give their destination, but confirmed that they could not land at Kigali airport because Rwandan armed forces were blocking the runway to all but French aircraft.

He said hardline elements of the Rwandan government were spread-

ing an anti-Belgian hate campaign, which may have contributed to the slaying of 10 Belgian members of a United Nations contingent in Rwanda on Thursday.

French government officials said the first of several evacuation flights for 600 French nationals and other foreigners in Rwanda planned for Saturday night had already started.

Nearly 300 French troops have been deployed at the airport since early Saturday in preparation for the evacuation.

Van Deweghe said the Rwandan Hutu authorities supported the French presence because France, unlike Belgium, had not withdrawn its troops during a large-scale offensive of rebel Tutsis in 1990.

"There is a hardline minority element trying to make the public believe that the Belgians are the bad guys," he said, adding that this element had blamed Belgium for the

deaths of the Rwandan and Burundi presidents last week.

The bloodshed in Rwanda was triggered on Wednesday when presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed with 10 others. Their aircraft crashed in Kigali, reportedly after being shot down.

The ten Belgian victims were slain Thursday after unsuccessfully trying to stop the murder of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingyamana by troops of the presidential guard – hard-line supporters of Hutu President Habyarimana.

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