

Belgium to evacuate its Kigali residents: deputy PM

AFP, April 9, 1994

BRUSSELS, April 9 (AFP) - Deputy Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo on Saturday confirmed that Belgium had started a military operation to evacuate foreign residents stranded in the fighting that broke out in Rwanda this week.

Di Rupo, interviewed on Belgian radio, confirmed that military planes had left Belgium to prepare to bring evacuate the estimated 1,5000 Belgians stranded in Rwanda, a former Belgian colony.

He said the operation would last "several days."

Earlier Saturday, a Belgian military spokesman had said the first two Belgian C-130 military planes left Melsbroek military airport near Brussels Saturday to take part in any evacuation.

Some 280 French paratroopers landed at the airport in the Rwandan capital Kigali Saturday to secure the facility for any evacuation, while about 200 US Marines were to arrive Saturday in Bujumbura, the capital of neighboring Burundi, to help with any evacuation.

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