

Eight UN soldiers wounded in Rwanda

AFP, February 21, 1995

KIGALI, Feb 21 (AFP) - Eight Tunisian soldiers in the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) were wounded by the explosion of a mine laid close to their barracks in the northwest of the country, UNAMIR announced Tuesday.

The Tunisian battalion headquarters at Mutara also came under small arms fire, including three rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) rounds in "a deliberate and unprovoked attack" just before midnight on February 15, a UN statement said.

"It is believed that this attack by unknown armed elements was aimed at destroying the signal installation within the camp," it added.

The eight soldiers were injured, four of them seriously, when a Tunisian patrol investigating the attack triggered off the mine blast the following day. The mine was apparently laid by the people who fired on their base. A second mine was defused, UNAMIR reported.

Three days later, two civilians

were killed by government troops at Gisenyi in the same part of the central African highland nation when looters attacked lorries carrying aid supplies for Rwandan refugees in camps across the border in eastern Zaire, another UN statement said.

The convoy was attacked by local people and repatriated Rwandans who were clearly angered by the passage of humanitarian aid which was not meant for them, the statement said.

After the attack, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) changed the route for convoys going to camps around Goma in eastern Zaire, which are home to hundreds of thousands of refugees, mainly from Rwanda's majority Hutu population.

"The looting of humanitarian relief supplies is unacceptable, the UNAMIR force commander General Guy Tousignant said. "Steps are being taken to determine who hindered the situation by preventing the WFP from withdrawing to a safe location

and by delaying the arrival of UN troops on the scene.”

The country plunged into ethnic carnage for three months last year after the death in a suspected rocket attack on his plane of Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6, before the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seized power in July.

The RPF installed a coalition government and accuses routed troops of the former regime and extremist Hutu militias, also exiled mainly in Zaire, of the genocide of between 500,000 and a million Tutsis and op-

position Hutus.

Some two million of the prewar population of about eight million fled into exile. Most of those still living in refugee camps are Hutus reluctant to return home for fear of reprisals by the RPF. Some RPF soldiers have been accused of summary executions.

The United Nations, which is seeking to help the government restore political stability and encourage refugees to return, has set up an international criminal court to try those accused of genocide.

at/nb/sayc AFP AFP