

Evacuation of foreigners continues in Rwanda

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PARIS, April 12 (AFP) - The evacuation of foreigners from strife-torn Rwanda continued Tuesday as various embassies shut down their operations there amid reports of rebel troops closing in on the capital Kigali and ongoing tribal bloodletting.

The American embassy in Nairobi said all of the 258 US citizens registered in Rwanda had left the country Tuesday.

"As far as I know, all Americans have left," embassy spokesman T.J. Dowling said.

In Moscow, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported that 22 Russian nationals including embassy staff and their dependents as well as Aeroflot airlines employees had been evacuated from Kigali to neighbouring Burundi.

They were expected to arrive back in Russia in the next few days, the agency said.

Germany also reported that nearly all of its 350 nationals, including ambassador Dieter Hoelscher,

have been evacuated.

The German foreign ministry said those still to be evacuated include several reporters from Deutsche Welle radio and their families blocked in their office by the fighting as well as a dozen or so aid workers deployed in the central part of the country.

Foreigners have been fleeing Rwanda since tribal massacres erupted last Wednesday after president Juvenal Habyarimana died when his plane was reportedly shut down as it was landing in Kigali.

Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira was also killed in the crash.

Since then, fighting between pro- and anti-government forces has left thousands dead and plunged the country into chaos.

France said Tuesday that it was also shutting down its embassy in Kigali given the "deterioration of the situation."

Meanwhile French military planes continued evacuating foreign nation-

als as well as Rwandan refugees including 94 orphans who arrived here Monday evening.

French foreign ministry spokesman Richard Duque said a total of 1,600 people, including 600 French nationals, have been evacuated by French military planes since last Saturday.

He said some 500 French paratroopers were still in Kigali to help evacuate the remaining foreigners but he did not know how long they would stay.

He added that a very small number of French nationals – mainly nuns and priests – had chosen to remain in Rwanda.

The Belgian defense ministry, for its part, announced that nearly 400 evacuees, mainly Belgians, had arrived at Brussels airport Tuesday from Nairobi.

They were flown in on two planes, one carrying 195 people – 186 Belgians and nine people of other nation-

alities, and another carrying 204 people, 158 of them Belgian.

The defense ministry said a total of 446 Belgians had fled Rwanda, a former Belgian colony, and about 1,000 others remained behind. It was impossible to know how many of those wanted to be evacuated, the ministry said.

It added that the Belgian evacuation operation, being conducted by Belgian troops, should be completed within three or four days. Belgians made up the largest group of foreign nationals in Rwanda, with more than 1,500 living there.

Another flight from Nairobi, carrying 400 people, was expected in Brussels early Tuesday afternoon.

In Paris, meanwhile, the foreign ministry said two flights from Bangui were expected later Tuesday carrying about 55 French nationals and 30 people of other nationalities.

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