

First batch of US troops arrive to evacuate Americans

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BUJUMBURA, April 9 (AFP) - A first planeload of US troops taking part in an operation to prepare to evacuate American nationals from strife-torn Rwanda arrived in the capital of neighbouring Burundi Saturday, airport officials said.

Officials said the Marines landed in a C-130 transport plane which flew in from Mombasa, Kenya. A further six US planes were expected later.

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Bruce Fitch said 330 Marines were involved in the operation, more than were earlier reported. He said the decision to send the men was a precautionary measure.

Officials at the Bujumbura airport said they were also expecting Belgian planes to land to evacuate 1,500 Belgians stranded in the Rwan-

dan capital, Kigali, but that they had no immediate information on their expected hour of arrival.

The US Marines, backed by helicopters and transport planes, are expected to be involved in plans to evacuate 255 Americans from Kigali, most of them aid personnel and missionaries.

The American soldiers arrived earlier Saturday in the Kenyan port of Mombasa, a diplomatic spokesman said in Nairobi.

The men are part of a 1,200-member Marines contingent stationed on US vessels off the Somali coast since last month's withdrawal of US forces involved in UN operations in the Horn of Africa country.

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