

France sends troops to Rwanda

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PARIS, April 9 (AFP) - France is sending troops to Rwanda to help evacuate French citizens from the civil war-torn east African country, the foreign ministry announced here Saturday morning.

"In view of the continuing and worsening violence in Kigali," Paris decided to send the troops overnight Friday to Saturday "to ensure the security necessary for an evacuation of French citizens", according to the foreign ministry statement.

France is believed to have 500 to 600 citizens in Rwanda.

On Friday, Belgium, the former colonial power, said it too was preparing for the possible evacuation of its 1,200 nationals in Rwanda.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked the Security Council on Friday to make urgent

plans for a possible evacuation of all UN civilian personnel in Rwanda.

Battles with heavy weapons raged in Kigali on Friday followed the deaths Thursday of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a plane crash.

The United States said it was closing its embassy in the capital Kigali and planning to evacuate 250 American citizens.

Belgian officials said their military had been instructed to draw up plans for a military evacuation of the approximately 1,500 Belgian nationals in Rwanda. Ten Belgian UN soldiers were killed Thursday.

Belgium, France, Britain and the United States were all reported to be in contact with each other on Friday to discuss the evacuation option.

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