

Green light for Belgian airlift in Rwanda

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BRUSSELS, April 10 (AFP) - Rwandan authorities have given Belgium the green light to begin an airlift of its 2,000 nationals out of the capital Kigali, the Belgian Defence Ministry said Sunday as fierce ethnic violence continued in the former Belgian colony in East Africa.

The interim government "has given permission to Belgian planes to land. Now we'll have to see if it has real control over the Presidential Guard troops which hold the airport," said ministry spokesman Colonel Freddy van Deweghe.

Belgian troops on the spot will assess the situation and if they decide a landing could be carried out safely, planes could arrive within the next few hours, he said.

Rwandan army troops have been blocking access by Belgian planes, although they allowed a French aircraft to evacuate 43 people Saturday.

Three planes carrying some 600 Belgian paratroopers left here Saturday for Nairobi and Bujumbura to as-

sist in the evacuation of Belgians and other foreigners from Kigali.

Foreign Minister Willy Claes indicated Sunday that some Belgian nationals could be evacuated on board French or US planes to safety, where the Belgian military would then take charge of them.

Speaking on the Flemish-language television channel BRTN, Claes said people would be evacuated at their own request and those who stayed behind did so at their own risk.

A Belgian military official told BRTN that the evacuation was expected to take four days, to allow for all the expatriates over the country to present themselves.

On Saturday, Van Deweghe had said hardline elements of the Rwandan government were spreading an anti-Belgian hate campaign, which may have contributed to the slaying of 10 Belgian members of a United Nations contingent there on Thursday.

The bloodshed in Rwanda was triggered on Wednesday when presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed with 10 others. Their aircraft crashed in Kigali, reportedly after being shot down.

Thursday after unsuccessfully trying to stop the murder of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingyamana by troops of the presidential guard – hard-line supporters of Hutu president Habyarimana.

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The 10 Belgian victims were killed