

# Grisly Discovery in Rwanda Leads French to Widen Role

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BISESERO, Rwanda, June 30 –

Four hundred sick and frail Tutsi, including scores of people suffering from grenade, machete and gunshot wounds, were rescued today from marauding Hutu forces by French troops near this town in western Rwanda.

One survivor indicated that the group was the largest remnant of the 10,000 Tutsi who lived in the region before the Rwandan civil war erupted again in April. Fewer than a thousand survive, he said.

Some Tutsi said they had been on the run since April, with little to eat other than a few potatoes and unripe sorghum. For the last 10 days, they said, they have been under daily attack from forces aligned with the Hutu-dominated Government – regular soldiers, paramilitary units and pro-Government militia.

French soldiers reported finding hundreds of bodies in the area, another reminder that despite the French intervention, the killings of Tutsi go on. Some American officials and human rights organizations have called the massacres genocide.

It was not until journalists alerted French troops to the ragtag band of 400 that a patrol was dispatched. The French soldiers were clearly unprepared for what they found, and set about immediately to provide military protection for the Tutsi, a mission the troops had rejected as recently as Wednesday.

"This is not what we were led to believe," said a noncommissioned officer at the French camp in Bisesero. "We were told that Tutsi were killing Hutu, and now this."

[French commandos evacuated 74 wounded Tutsi from the area late Thursday, The Associated Press reported from Goma, Zaire. The evacuees were flown in six helicopters to Goma, which is the base for the

French mission and has one of the two field hospitals set up for sick and wounded civilians.]

Some Tutsi had grisly wounds. A 10-year-old boy had wounds on his head and a long scar on his right cheek, where he had been beaten with a club and cut. His left hand was badly mutilated, slashed with a machete. A woman in her 20's had a slash on her neck, back and right shoulder from a machete. An emaciated man hobbled with a stick, a gaping bullet wound in his left buttock. Another man had a jagged shrapnel wound on his lower left leg.

There were very few women and no infants. "They could not run fast enough with the children, so they were the first to be killed," said Eric Nzabihimana, 28, a teacher, who said his parents and five brothers and sisters had been killed. "We have had nothing to eat, so we had no strength to defend ourselves or to run."

The stench of rotting bodies wafted through the mountain air. The body of one teen-ager lay just off the road. One cluster of about 30 of the dead, mostly women and children, appeared to have been killed within the past few days.

At least 300 to 400 corpses are in the surrounding hills, said a French soldier who reached the refugees. "They are everywhere," he said.

## Past Support for Hutu

Hundreds of thousands of Tutsi have been killed since April, when the country's four-year-old civil war between the Government and Tutsi-led rebels erupted in new bloodletting after a suspicious plane crash killed Rwanda's President, a Hutu, and his counterpart from Burundi.

The French insist their intervention, which is backed by the United Nations, is one of relief and is not intended to benefit either faction. But France supported the Government with arms and training during the first years of the civil war.

The French are offering protection for Tutsi in refugee camps they are setting up in the area. But soldiers and armed Hutu in civilian clothes man checkpoints along the roads, making it impossible for Tutsi to reach the camps.

The French military unit based in Gishyita, four miles west of Bisesero, was aware that people in the mountains were being killed every night, Comdr. Marin Gillier said on Wednesday. But the French Defense Minister, Francois Leotard, after a briefing here from Commander Gillier, rejected any operation to evacuate or protect the embattled Tutsi.

## **French Change Mission**

Mr. Leotard said the French did not have enough troops to protect everyone. There were 300 French troops in Rwanda today ; another 1,200 were at bases across the border in Zaire.

The French troops from Gishyita were distributing food to Hutu refugees today when they were alerted by journalists to the Tutsi in Bisesero.

The French sent a small patrol, and what it found caused the French military to change its mind about what needs to be done. More troops were dispatched.

When a truckload of French paratroopers and navy commandos arrived in mid-afternoon, the Tutsi began to stand, some as thin as the poles they used to support themselves. They applauded and cheered, raised their arms and gave thumbs-up signs. Smiles appeared ; eyes brightened.

## **On the Horizon, the Hutu**

The French soldiers, in full combat gear and with recoilless rifles and machine guns, established defensive positions, mounting their assault rifles on tripods and setting up watch around the perimeter of the camp.

With binoculars, they scanned the ridge line to the south, where on the edge of a small woodland a mass

of people was silhouetted against the sky. The Tutsi said they were Hutu militia.

"I can't see if they have guns," said a French soldier. But it didn't matter, he noted, since "the massacres aren't with guns."

Another soldier said of the Tutsis, "If we leave, they will be dead by tonight."